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TARGET SPRING VENISON

Cody Weller discusses how to best target spring hinds before they drop fawns for the summer

YOUTH SHOOTING TIPS

As part of the Mini Action rifle build series we cover shooting and coaching tips for hunting with youths and newbies

WEST COAST ALPINE DOUBLE

Jarrod Nicholson targets big chamois bucks on the West Coast, and turns up a rogue bull tahr



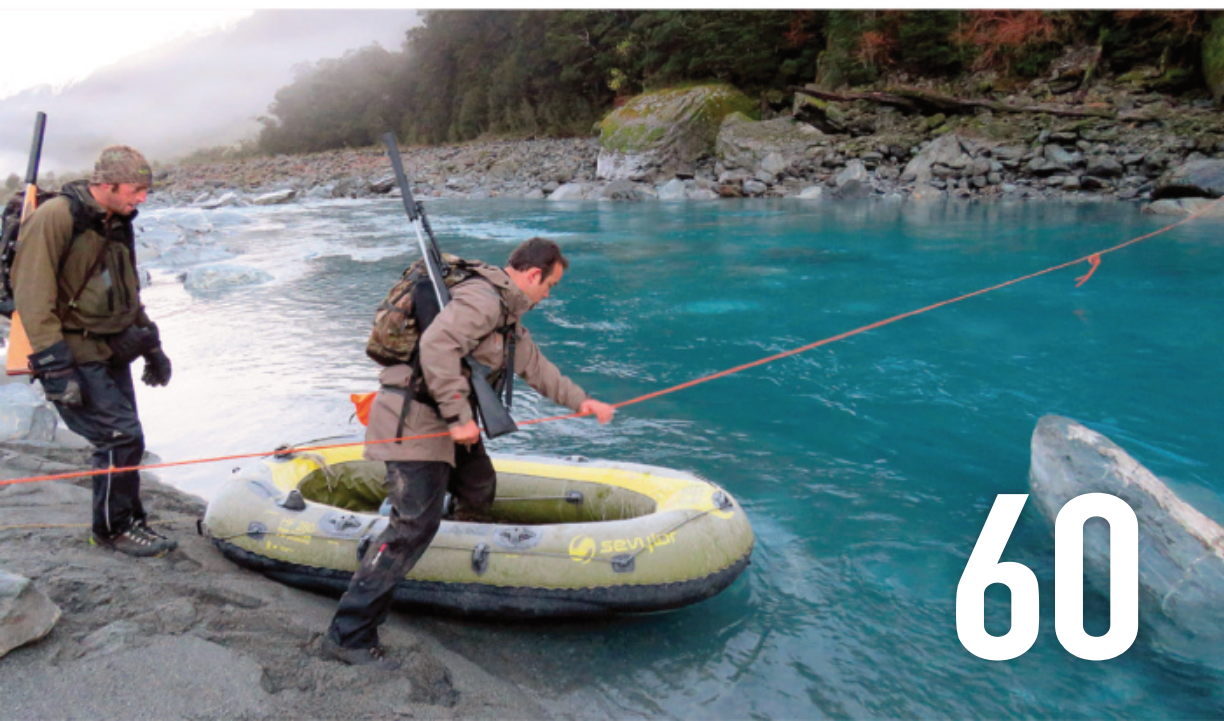
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Mr G from Spartan taking a steep uphill shot in the Rangitata.

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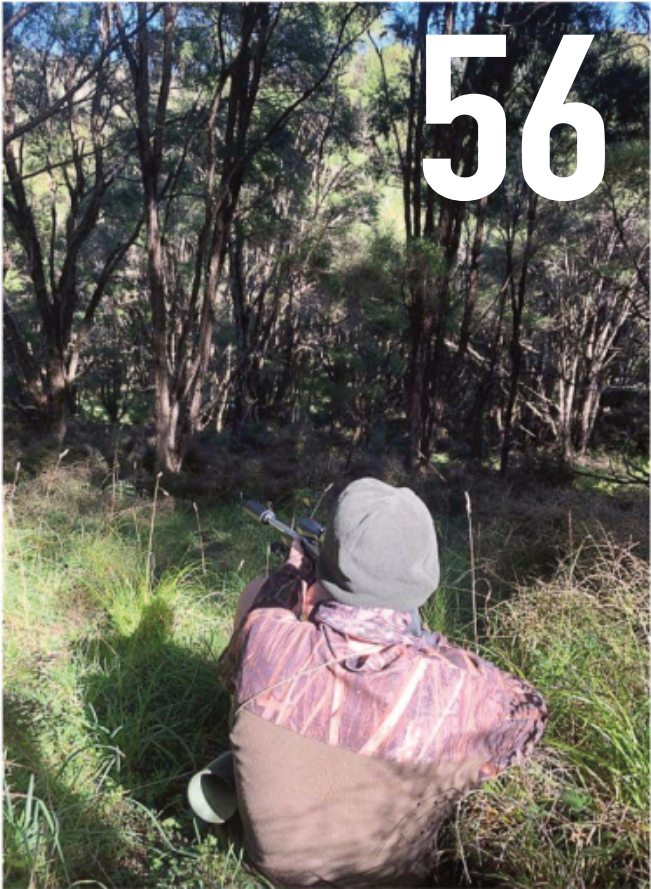
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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Spring is not far away now in many areas despite a very challenging winter, and depending on your altitude. The very first shoots of Mountain tutu are just starting to appear on the warmest claypans in the Kaweka Forest Park, which means the Sika will be hoovering them up very soon.

KAWEKA 1080

While we were in the Kawekas doing a kiwi nest raid on Sunday, Ospri finally did the 1080 drop in the Eastern Kawekas that has been scheduled since July. The Kaweka Liaison Group agreed to this drop as a buffer zone along the Park boundary - not because there is any TB in the Park, but to stop the TB outbreak on Hawkes Bay farmland getting into the possums in the Park.

We were pretty disappointed at the signage at the Park access points, with only the usual pretty small standard poison notification signs and the word 1080 not very obvious at all. Yes, they all said Sodium monofluoroacetate in the bold heading at the top, but how many of the public know this is 1080? Unless you were aware of the impending 1080 drop, it would have been very easy to not notice this was anything more than the usual localised feratox or brodifacoum poison signs which few people read as they don't effect Park users to any great extent. While this may meet Ospri's signage requirements, it seemed crazy that there weren't much larger signs at the main access points with the word 1080 clearly legible in large letters at the top. We will be following this up with Ospri.

KEA AND 1080

Increasing areas of public conservation land are being signalled for 1080 drops in the next few years by both Ospri's TB eradication and DOC's biodiversity programs. This has ramifications for not only our valued introduced species but also some very susceptible native species like kea - which are well known to consume cereal 1080 baits with large documented by-kills from some operations. I recently attended a kea/1080 workshop at DOC Rangiora, where Dr Laura Young from the Kea Conservation Trust and DOC's kea program brought us up to date with their work on kea 1080 mitigation measures. There are certainly some promising looking kea repellent options being trialled at the moment that look good for the future. Another issue that we need to be dealing with asap that needs the same effort and resources put into it is finding an effective and affordable deer repellent that also repels kea. This is the only way we can protect not only our iconic native species but also our heritage deer herds, and minimise the conflict which is a huge waste of everyone's valuable time and energy.

TAHR CONTROL

DOC's tahr control work for the year should be finished by the time you read this, and you will be able to access the information on their website. As well as the yearly control plans we are working with the Department on a longer term plan for the management of tahr. This includes establishing some evidenced based vegetation bottom lines, attempting to deal with the increasing demand on the diminished tahr resource by both the commercial and recreational sector, and looking at ways to handle changes in budget due to the vagaries of government funding.



GAME MANAGEMENT

Recently I've been hearing a little commentary / uncertainty around game animal management - mostly due to a lack of understanding about what this actually means. Game animal management will be hugely varied across our game animal herds and places, depending on what the desired hunting, conservation and wider community outcomes there may be for each herd and place.

It is far from one size fits all. Think of it as a series of overlays that we apply across all the areas where game animals exist. The more specific the management objective is for a place and herd the more layers of management will be required.

At its simplest level, the overlay that covers the whole country may just be about getting more people out in the hills and making them more successful whatever. The future of hunting and our game animals depends on us being able to do this. The overlay on top of this could be influencing some hunter behaviour by encouraging them to target more breeding females where needed whether they are harvesting meat or looking for trophies or both. Each overlay above that will have progressively more specific actions required to meet that layer's objectives.

Then at the top end of the spectrum we have the likes of the Fiordland Wapiti herd. This is managed specifically as a trophy herd to produce as many 8 year old plus trophy bulls and provide the coveted Fiordland Wapiti hunting experience for as many hunters as possible. That is the universally accepted goal for that area, and something the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation has been working successfully towards for many years now. This is going to require a number of management overlays including self-discipline from us hunters in not shooting immature males, managed culling, managed WARO, vegetation monitoring and conservation projects such as the predator trapping, for it to be successful.

Somewhere in the middle will be the likes of the heritage Red deer herds - the Otago and Rakaia bloodline areas. The Wanaka and Haast Roar ballots are already a form of hunter management that could easily be extended to include guidelines on what animals to target. And the Rakaia area is a hugely popular and accessible herd for both meat gathering and trophy hunting. These areas will have more challenges with balancing people's needs. Meat only hunters who aren't interested in trophies will need to consider what their fellow trophy hunters want from a herd like this, and if possible be selfless by taking a hind instead of an immature stag. They are generally the best eating anyway - whoever said spikers are great eating is fooling themselves, as they are the lowest in the pecking order, never get the best feed

SPOT
THE
LOGO

The winners for last issue are **John Bowen** and **Steven Garwood**. Logos appeared on the Workshop Innovation advert on page 34 and the Lyman CR Pain advert on page 65.

and rarely get very fat at all. These sorts of herds will need careful thought and considerable consultation with the hunting and wider community to take everyone along on the game animal management journey.

All our game animal herds will fall somewhere along this continuum, from very few management overlays (most of New Zealand), to many overlays where there is intense management (only priority herds and places). Their position on the continuum may well change as time goes by and hunters and the community's aspirations for that area and herd change or mature.

Someone said they do not want to have to worry about what they are going to shoot - well if that is the case go to one of the many areas where the community objective might be shoot anything you want. Somewhere like Fiordland outside of the Wapiti area or parts of the Southern Ruahines comes to mind as the objective might be just to keep the deer population in check.

If you go into the Wapiti area or one of the other herds that may have more specific community determined outcomes, you will need to accept what the community has decided for that area. Do not be surprised if you are not popular for shooting a promising 4 year old 12 point bull/stag/buck etc that the herd desperately needed to pass on its genetics - and that also would have made a fantastic trophy for some lucky future hunter once it had fully matured. **Hunters in New Zealand are going to have to learn to become far more selfless going forward, or our passion and our game animals will not survive.**

Greg



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Up And Over

WRITTEN BY - MITCH THORN
@SOUTHISLANDRIFLEWALKERS



Fizzing for what the next few days had in store for us

Everyone has their own reasons for hunting, and within that, every hunt has its own purpose. Some weeks the freezers are empty, and in other weeks those trophies are calling

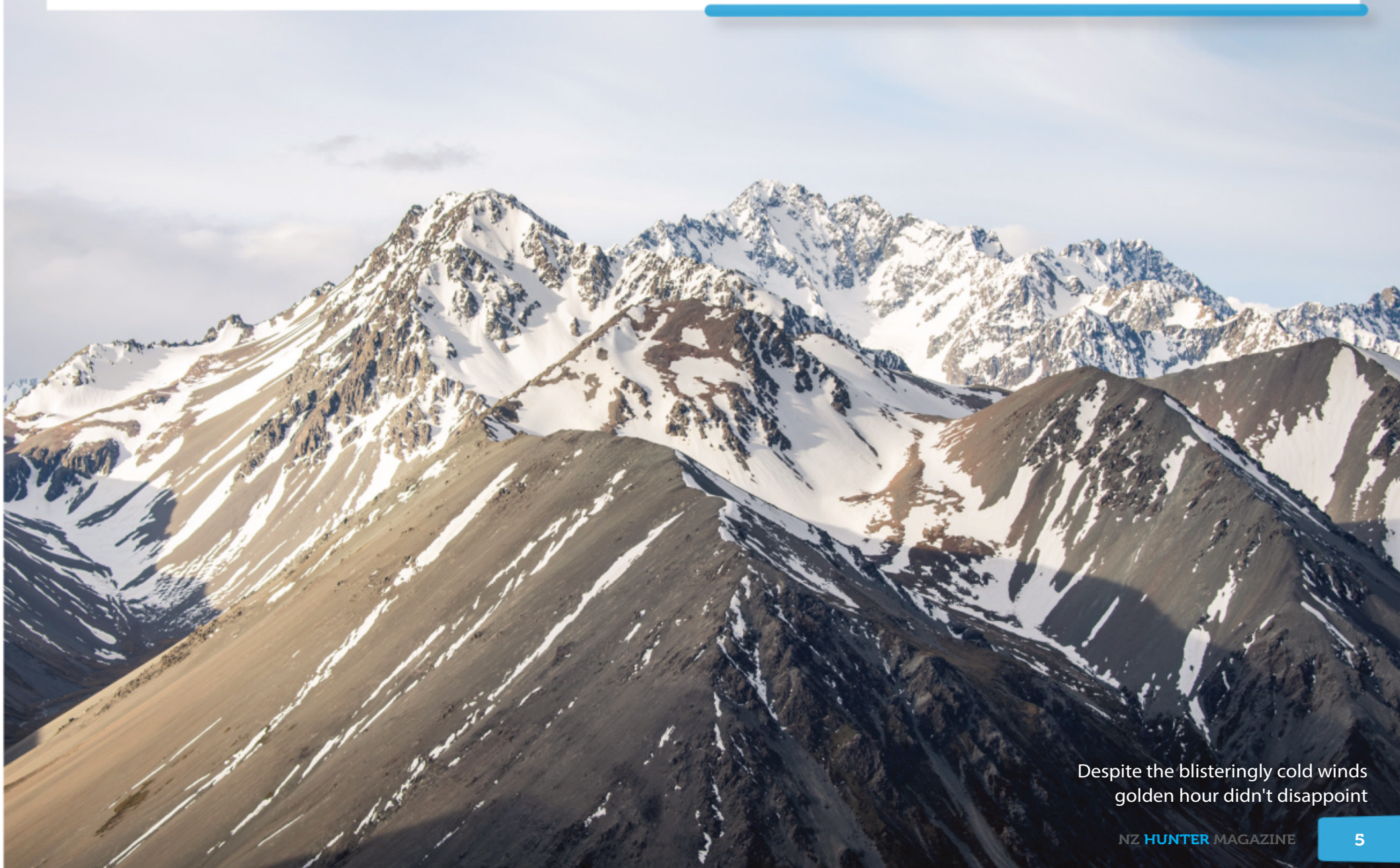
Sometimes you just want to look around the next corner and other times you want to push yourself.

You might be overdue a catchup with an old friend and, more often than not,

you just want to go for a walk and get some air. The reason for this hunt lies somewhere between all of these .

It was mid-November and Chris and I wanted to head back into an area we'd previously hunted. The underlying aim was to find me

an old bull tahr for the wall, but we'd be happy to return home with some meat. **If you've hunted tahr you'll be familiar with 'lowvember';** at this time of the year, they often drop down from their life in the cliffs making them an easier target for us less vertically inclined hunters. It was a plan that had worked for us before - three years earlier



Despite the blisteringly cold winds golden hour didn't disappoint



Chris with his 14" bull
we'd been lucky enough
to find on a previous trip

we'd walked out of this same area with grins from ear to ear as Chris hauled his caped 14" bull home. **We set off early on Saturday morning, hoping to repeat our previous success.**

I don't often hunt the same area twice,

mainly because of my unscratchable itch to explore as much of the Southern Alps as possible. In attempt to cater for that itch we decided to follow a different route into the catchment. Rather than follow the river as we did last time we planned to climb up and over a

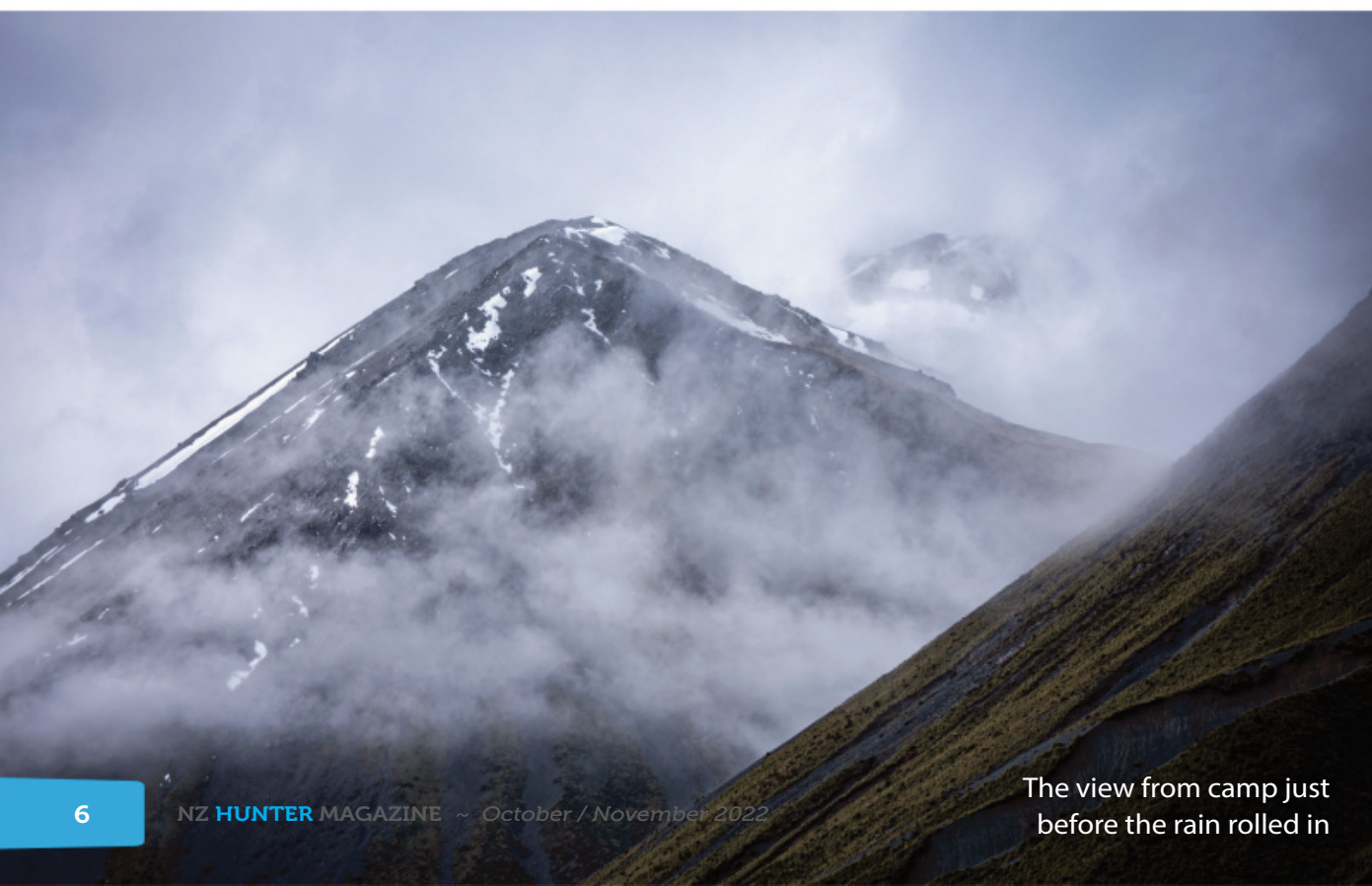
nearby peak to access the area. Shorter, in a straight line, we said, as we purposefully ignored the unnecessary climb we'd set ourselves. About four hours into the trip we found ourselves battling towards the summit... was it really going to be worth all this extra effort? Without a doubt.

As we crested the ridgeline the country opened up in front of us, and we could see for bloody miles!

Sitting a bit above 2000 metres we were treated to a 180-degree panorama of icy peaks disappearing into the horizon. To both the north and the south they seemed to be endless - to our east the foothills looked miniscule compared to the giants on our west. Riddled with glaciers and still clinging on to a fair amount of snow we were staring straight into the main divide. A fresh nor' west was gusting in our faces bringing frozen air to cool us off from the sun still high in the sky. **We both hoped it wasn't going to pick up.**

It was time to find a spot for lunch, and more importantly to get the binos out.

The first animal we spotted was a lone nanny perched within a bluff system below us. She was about 1 kilometre away, so we set up the p1000 camera



The view from camp just
before the rain rolled in



Looking north along the length of the main divide

and left it recording while we carried on glassing. I thought I was onto a bull, and in my efforts to put Chris onto it he found a deer nearby. My 'bull' turned out to be a bush... but this was the first time we'd seen deer in this area, with the exciting prospect of bringing home some venison. While we were busy looking at the deer the camera recorded something pretty awesome that we had no idea of at the time.

While perched in amongst a bluff system the nanny gave birth! We only wish we'd been a bit closer so the recording could be a bit clearer—regardless it's a unique bit of footage!

Clueless as to what had just happened, Chris and I carried on around the tops to open up some more country. The wind had started to pick up a little so we tried to find somewhere relatively sheltered. Three hours went by, and we hadn't seen any more animals so it was time to drop down to the riverbed and set up camp. **There were only a few hours of daylight left so we planned on hunting our way down.** As we set off from our glassing possie we got smacked by the nor' west which had increased from an annoying breeze to a knock-you-off-your-feet gale. Our plan to hunt

our way down quickly turned into a scramble off the tops, and any exposed skin was almost instantly numbed by the wind. We jumped onto a scree and started flying down the face, as even in average conditions it provides a lot of fun.

About halfway down the scree we spotted a bull just above a gorge at the base of the hill. It hadn't yet seen us and was feeding down river towards some scrubby faces. We didn't get a chance to look at his horns, but he held a large mane, so we guessed he had some age on him. Our frantic scree run turned slightly less frantic as we stopped every couple of minutes to check on the bull's position. **He'd dropped into a fold of scrub just beneath the gorge so we took the chance to close the gap.**

Above the faces he was grazing on was a tussock terrace, and our approach couldn't have been any easier. The wind was more settled down low, just a constant breeze heading downstream. We looped below where we'd last seen him and crept towards the edge of the terrace. No sign of him. With daylight quickly fading we decided



Happy to stretch the legs after about 18 hours in the tent

to split up to try and at least lay eyes on him and assess his size. Chris crept around the faces downstream with the camera and I stalked upstream with the rifle. **I remember feeling like it was a recipe for disaster - Murphy's Law would've had Chris spot a 14" monster.** Thankfully luck was on our side



Chris battling up the scree on the way out



Chris with the huge hind... the smallest of the mob!



Chuffed to have got some meat, little did we know the mob of deer was just down the hill

as I spotted a couple of bulls feeding in a gut no more than 20 metres away as I made my way around the face. My heart skipped a beat as I slowly brought the rifle up, thinking that surely it wasn't going to be this easy.

It wasn't. The two bulls were young, not the shooter I was after. I managed to get Chris's attention and signalled for him to bring the camera. I can only imagine the excitement he was feeling while running up the hill seeing me with the rifle ready. We remained hidden in the hopes the older bull was amongst the scrub or about to feed over from the next gut. With our daylight as good as gone and no sign of the older bull we carried

on to set up camp. It was epic to see the bulls going about their day from so close with no idea of our presence; it would've been an ideal opportunity for a bow hunter!

The next morning was calm and overcast. **A storm was set to blow in by lunch time so we set off as soon as we managed to drag ourselves out of bed to hunt our way up the main river.** We were making our way up to where Chris had shot his bull all those years ago, so we were optimistic about what we could find. A few nanny groups later and we'd found the first bull of the morning. Unfortunately no monster, but a good sign. We carried on

further up-valley and managed to find another two bulls feeding together. Same story, great potential but not quite old enough. The morning was getting on and the weather was starting to turn so we decided a nanny was on the cards. A plan was made over brekkie to hunt a nanny we'd spotted earlier. Not to be deterred, Chris carried on glassing and managed to pick up a nice bull feeding amongst thick scrub. **We had just enough time to get the camera on him before he disappeared into it.**



With winter behind us the snow was beginning to melt into some wild shapes

This hunt ticked pretty much all the boxes. We didn't walk out with a caped-out old bull but we walked out with so much more: **we had meat for our families, we'd been pushed to our limits, we'd seen a new area, we'd caught up with each other's lives and created some great memories – and, as I said at the start, we'd gone for a bloody good walk to get some air.**





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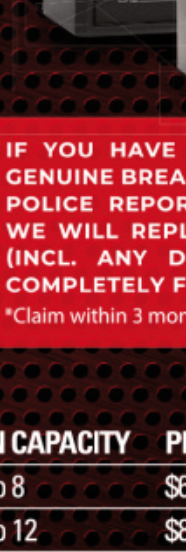
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OTAGO'S Alpine Stags

I had planned this weekend hunt a year ago, to a spot that my former work mates had talked about three years previously. Despite much talking, a few plans but no action I decided to go in there myself

On the first trip in 2020 we saw numerous chamois on the first evening, and also the next morning. Spotting a mob of four hinds coming up the hill, I decided that I would like to fill the empty freezer and leave the stags for another time – so after putting in a bit of a stalk I had a very large and fat hind on the ground.

Not wanting to waste any meat made for a very heavy walk (50 kilograms) out that Saturday afternoon.

After that I decided that I would head in

the same time the following year- this time though to only put a big stag or chamois on the ground.

In the week leading up to the second

trip in 2021 my hunting mate Lennon messaged, asking what I was planning for the weekend. I told him my plans and made sure that he knew I was on a trophy hunting mission, seeing he was a meat hunter through and through. He was still keen so we made a plan to head in – him going in a couple of hours earlier with the intention of catching with each other up in the hills. As it happened, I caught up to him not far into the walk where he had spotted



a hind and yearling. Unfortunately, they had spooked, as they would have been an ideal freezer filler, being close to the car. We then headed into my camp spot. On the way we spooked two stags way up high, miles from any cover and with very little feed around, which just goes to show that you should always expect animals, no matter where you are. We made it to the campsite about 30 minutes later and set up the tents before going for a quick glass in a small basin not far from camp but with no success. We went to bed after dinner with the alarm set for early the next morning.

Waking to a blustery morning we headed out at first light for a look.

At this point the sun was coming up, giving everything a golden glow and not spotting anything in the first gully we headed further along the range. There were a few chamois, including a couple looking back into the first basin, then Lennon gestured to me that he had spotted antler, so I headed back over to him and put the camera on two stags and spiker. After a bit of evaluating, I decided on a nice 12 but only mid 30s maximum in length. The other a quite long 10 which would have been pushing 40 inches, but I decided neither were the old 40+ inch 12-point stag I was looking for.

I convinced Lennon he didn't need to shoot the spiker for meat and it would be best to leave them undisturbed for another year of growing. We carried

on hunting, making our way through head basins spotting a few chamois but not seeing any more deer. Lennon left me at mid-day as he had to be out by Saturday night and I had an exciting walk back to camp that night as a thunderstorm chased me down the range. I made it to my tent just as it started raining. It's quite unnerving, having lightning coming your way while you are way up high with nothing else around.

Next morning I went in the opposite direction getting into some chamois and another mob of stags but no shooters – this made for a much lighter walk out to the car than the previous year! I decided, yet again, to walk in the following year over the same weekend.

After a summer up north of fishing, drinking and not much exercise, the first couple of hunts in 2022 were



Camp way up high in the tops
Lennon Bright Photography



The stags the first year we saw them



Lloyd with his stag

plagued by bad weather, yet still had me losing quite a bit of sweat and giving the lungs a good work out. High winds and claggy weather limited hunting opportunities.

Watching the weather forecast coming up to the planned weekend, I was nervous about the predicted cloud because at 1600 metres, cloud is often clag. **We decided to give it a crack anyway.** This year my mate Lloyd was joining me – maybe due to the big stag stories I had told him! The plan was to take his truck (with good aircon!) and try to leave home about 4pm. But as it goes on the farm, Lloyd got caught with extra work and we ended up heading off an hour later, lacing the boots up and putting the packs on about 6.30pm for the eight kilometre walk in. The walk had us losing a bit of sweat but wasn't too bad overall, with open tussock walking the whole way. A few breather and glassing breaks led to us picking up one mob of six deer consisting of hinds, spikers, and fawns, which were cool to see way out in the open, glowing in the evening sunlight. **Making it to camp we ducked over to the basin close by for a look but didn't spot anything.**

So to the campsite and setting up of tents – the low cloud hugging the hills to the south was an ominous sign. After a patchy sleep worrying if I would be able to see anything in the

morning, I was greatly relieved to be greeted by an overcast day when I put my head outside.

With breakfast in us, we headed over to the basin where we had seen the stags the previous year and got there before daybreak. Waiting for enough light to glass I went onto my phone and Lloyd started eating his BCC breakfast, but it was only a few minutes before he noticed movement below us. He picked up his binoculars and saw a stag moving across a green moss field. Locating it myself, I scanned around the area and picked up a second stag below the first one. **While it was too dark to see properly, catching glimpses of antlers was exciting.** Ranging them at 370 metres we decided to close the gap and quite easily made it to a spot 235 metres away. Evaluating the stags at closer range and with more light we could easily see that Lloyd's stag was a big old mature animal with solid timber but lacking length – estimated at 32-35 inches long but definitely a shooter. My stag had a good mature look and had some serious length and shape – definitely in that 40 inch bracket. A closer look confirmed that he was a 12 but unfortunately had one very weak bay tine. Apart from that he was perfect in every way, so, the decision to take them wasn't a hard one to make. We got the rifles dialled and each found a good rest. My stag was

standing perfectly broadside but Lloyd's wasn't wanting to play ball.

After waiting about ten minutes I asked if Lloyd was too worried about shooting his stag and he kindly said he wasn't and was happy for me to shoot my stag and see what happened with his. Often when using the suppressed .270 animals nearby don't know what has happened. This was not to be the case this time as, when I fired and smacked my stag straight in the shoulder, Lloyd's stag took off and out of sight. A quick change of position and after the first shot going over its back he smoked it on his second shot rolling it down the hill. **Although my stag was dead on its feet after the first shot, I ended up putting another in just to make sure.**

How good was that! Two stags on the ground by 7.30am and goodies to boot. Some yahoos and what not later, we packed up our gear and headed down to the stags, going to Lloyd's first. His was a big old boy with heavy timber and good shape coming in at 35 inches. We then headed to my stag – you could see he was big from a distance and only got bigger as we got closer. After admiring him for a bit we put the tape over him and he measured 42 ½ inches, even on both sides. To say I was stoked to have finally entered the 40+ inch, 12 point club after many days and nights on the hills is an understatement.

With all day ahead of us we spend some time taking photos and then caping out my stag before slogging it up the hill to camp for lunch then on back to the truck. We were well relieved to make it back to the truck and drop the heavy packs, and the beer tasted especially good once we got home.

The next goal is to find a 40 incher for Lloyd. I can't wait to see the finished mount being completed by New Zealand Taxidermy in Luggate.



My trophy stag, measuring 42½ inches even on both sides



The stags safely back at camp



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**SUB-MOA
GUARANTEE**



HORNADY BRASS

PART THREE BUSH PIGLET

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

Blake Hamilton practicing getting the gun on target and 'steering' the gun with the butt

This deviates from the usual build article progression with a few tips on general coaching as well as rifle setup. This is about kids mostly but a lot of it applies to any newcomer to the sport.

THE PREP CALIBRE AND RECOIL

The first hurdle is choosing a calibre.

There is a lot that goes in to this as you have to balance recoil with enough energy to do the job well. A lot of people will go for a 223, there are a lot of them around and the ammo is cheap. But they do require good shot placement, and that's not necessarily ideal for kids.

They might shoot like champions at the range, but hyped up on adrenalin while staring through the scope at their first deer most kids are going to have a bit of wobble! This is where you want to have a bit more terminal performance to make up for a poor shot. A Red deer shot in the chest with a 223 can go a long way, and the slightest stick will deflect the projectile.

Also, it pays to be very mindful of what you practice on. A common progression is shooting small game, then goats, before

moving on to deer. Goats seem like an obvious choice, and a 223 ideal, but goats are such terribly vocal creatures. If you have a kid who's a little more sensitive a nanny goat bleating it's head off as it dies might put them off a bit. So again I'd recommend something like the 6.5 Grendel or similar to be sure of better terminal performance and a quicker, cleaner death. Kids can be incredibly empathetic and the thought of a lost or wounded animal could really put them off the sport.

Obviously the flip side of this is too much recoil. Some kids (I'll say it, especially the boys!) want to shoot a 300 Win Mag first time around – it's fun, it makes a big old bang and they get all sorts of bragging rights with their mates! It's easy to let them have a go but I'd warn against it, they can so easily develop a terrible flinch and that is a whole lot of work to undo. I've seen some kids squeeze their eyes tight shut and yank the trigger like they're

touching off the wick on a cannon, when they're only shooting a 7mm-08!

When it comes to the gun specifics, you need a suitable length of pull (LOP – the stock length from the end of the butt pad up to the trigger) and a nice light trigger of not more than 2.5 lbs. Remember a 5lb trigger is a lot of effort for a youth, if it's heavy for you then it's twice as bad for them - not good for accuracy.

I truly think the 6.5 Grendel is a great round for kids to learn with, balancing the recoil and terminal performance needs really well. The adjustable trigger and a huge array of stock options make the Mini Action simply ideal.

THE SCOPE

The eye relief of the scope is another area you can improve on to help your youth. There are actually two components at play, which can unfortunately cancel each other out. One being eye relief, the other being the eyebox.

Eye relief – This is the distance your eye is from the scope. The Panamax was sharp and consistent enough for most entry level situations, and had 80mm of eye

relief which isn't too bad. Any gain in eye relief is very useful for kids to help them fit the rifle better and stay clear of the scope during recoil.

The Eyebox – This is how much flexibility the eye relief has, front-to-back and side-to-side. It's not a physical part of the scope, it's the space in which your eye gets a full field of view through the scope. A scope with a 'less critical' eyebox allows the shooter more flexibility about where their head is comfortable and most importantly, to find the animal in the scope quicker. A greater eye relief can often actually mean a more critical eye box. You can imagine how the light coming through the scope focusing further back creates a tighter (more critical) eyebox. With this rifle it is probably actually more beneficial to have a less critical eye box given it has such low recoil to worry about.

Premium scope attributes like greater image resolution, better low light performance and a good field of view will all make the shooting experience better. But there are trade-offs, like the weight in the Zeiss range - and of course you do have to decide how much you trust your teenager (or magazine editor for that matter – sorry about that time Greg...) not to bang a high end scope against a rock! On the other hand, a high end scope might be less likely to be knocked out, so it's up to you and your budget. We'll certainly be looking to upgrade the scope in the future, partly to gain a less critical eyebox but especially to gain the optical advantages.

YOUTHS

Now, on to the rifle build - we've set our 6.5 Grendel up for two stages of development.

Firstly with a heavier stock, the MDT Oryx youth aluminium chassis. This is for early stages of shooting and hunting where the teacher will be carrying the rifle and all shots will be prone. The stiff chassis makes the rifle superbly accurate and the additional weight serves to soften recoil hugely. If you have a particularly sensitive child or beginner you could even fit additional baffles to the modular Sonic Suppressor,

but with the extra weight it's an absolute puppy to shoot.

LOP is important for accuracy and recoil control, if it's too long kids will need to climb half over the butt stock to get proper eye-relief which means the recoil pad won't be on their shoulder. Firstly that's hardly going to promote consistent accuracy, but it's also going to provide terrible recoil control and if the calibre is big enough, be a recipe for copping a scope to the eye! Likewise if it's too short, they just can't get away from the scope and if they do the butt is floating in front of their shoulder.

The MDT does its job in the weight department, weighing a whole 1.9kg itself. At its shortest setting it shaves two inches off the length of pull compared to the synthetic factory stock, measuring 12 1/4". There is a quarter inch spacer for when your young shooter grows a bit, it's as simple as loosening the butt screws and slipping it in.

It has an adjustable comb for proper cheek weld. This would be a great feature if it weren't so incredibly high. With the range of adjustment available it would have been good to start lower as with low hunting rings I couldn't get my head down enough to see down the scope! It seemed to work well for Samantha though, and for Blake, but he'd grow out of it fairly fast. I've spent too much time around Greg clearly as I soon discovered you could modify it a bit to gain a couple extra millimetres by shaving down the part where the comb meets the stock. It also didn't come with sling swivel studs which I found unusual, requiring an M-LOK adaptor, but it is certainly slanted more toward the competition/tactical looking market.

TEENAGERS

When your young hunter has moved up to being able to carry the rifle on their own and there's the potential for kneeling or standing shots then we want to cut the weight back as much as possible. Again, the Mini Action excels for

HOW TO MEASURE LENGTH OF PULL



To measure Length Of Pull (LOP) hold the pistol grip in your outstretched hand, as in **A** and **C**.

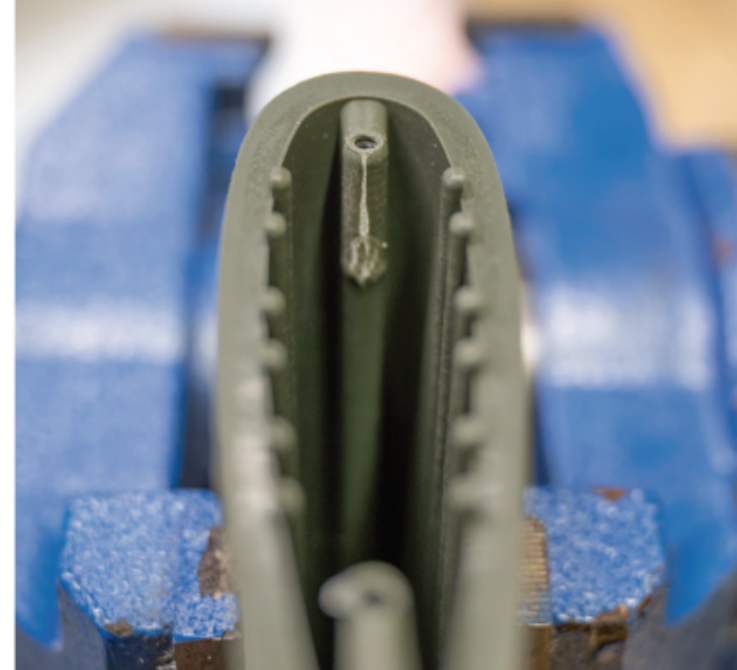
Then bend your arm, 90 degrees if possible.

In **B**, while I am holding the gun, you can see the stock is too short. It does not reach the crook of the elbow.

In **D**, while Samantha is holding it, you can see that the stock is too long, catching on her bicep. However it is not far off, so we may fit a smaller recoil pad rather than cutting the stock.



If you were to shorten the factory stock you can see Howa have made it very simple. The recoil pad mounts run all the way the length of the stock, as do the stabilising extrusions



this application. It's light, short and very portable for youths.

It's always a juggling act to balance the recoil with ease of use, but with 14-16 year olds who will be applying for their own license soon it's likely safe to make the rifle easier to hold up and shoot - and more portable. Especially with the Grendel's mild recoil. A kid trying to hold a front heavy gun is a recipe for disaster. Long barrels and suppressors just make accurate freehand shooting exponentially harder.

For this scenario we've simply cut the plastic factory stock down. Removing an inch off the length of pull and shuffling the recoil pad up to match, though you can gain a lot by just opting for a thinner pad given the factory one is about an inch thick on its own. The Howa is pretty light in its factory arrangement with a relatively short barrel too. That's only going to get shorter in the future and help pull the centre of gravity back and make for more stable freehand shots.

How much to remove from the stock depends on your youth, the traditional measure for LOP is to grasp the pistol grip properly with your arm straight out, then as you raise your arm to a right angle the pad should easily fit inside the crook of your arm. Or at least certainly not longer than your bicep. You can afford to be slightly less fussy for prone shooting, but a proper fit will help hugely for standing shots. For this build we fitted it to

Samantha's LOP given it's technically her gun - I just happen to use it a lot...

Howa were quite considerate in their stock design and the inserts for the butt pad screws go all the way to the pistol grip. There are some extrusions that prevent the butt pad sliding side to side, with some clever cutting you could keep those, but clearly I'm not clever. There is no limit whatsoever to how much you can trim off the stock, though if you go much more than an inch you'll have to move the sling swivel stud, and always be conscious of the eye relief needed. We'd recommend cutting it as short as you think you'll ever need it, as you can always build it back up with spacers as your shooter grows. And of course if you do 'accidentally' cut too much it's a good excuse to upgrade to a carbon stock I suppose...

THE HUNTING

You can practice with an air rifle on targets from a very young age. This builds familiarity and drums in safety from the earliest point possible. Just a tip - things that shatter like clays or explode like cans half-filled with water (but not glass bottles!) are a big hit. The fold up steel targets also give a good bit of satisfaction with a lot less cleanup.

When you start with rimfires you want to practice dry-firing first. It's the most

important way to teach anyone as there is no bang or recoil to distract them from correct trigger let-off and following through on the target. By this I mean telling the shooter to focus on keeping the crosshairs on the target after the shot has gone off, a huge psychological tool for accurate shooting. If you're coaching someone this is also a great opportunity to watch for a flinch. Running through a lot of dry fires will eliminate that flinch.

Starting hunting on small game like rabbits and possums is almost a given. Rabbits especially will challenge your aspiring hunter to put some real time in to their stalking. Start explaining the anatomy with the vitals, the skeletal structure and the guts as a no go area.

Use a suppressor, and use hearing protection as much as possible. It builds good habits (that I needed as young fella) and normalizes it. Splash out on some Axil noise cancelling earmuffs, they will make the experience much more pleasant as you can talk normally in between shots.

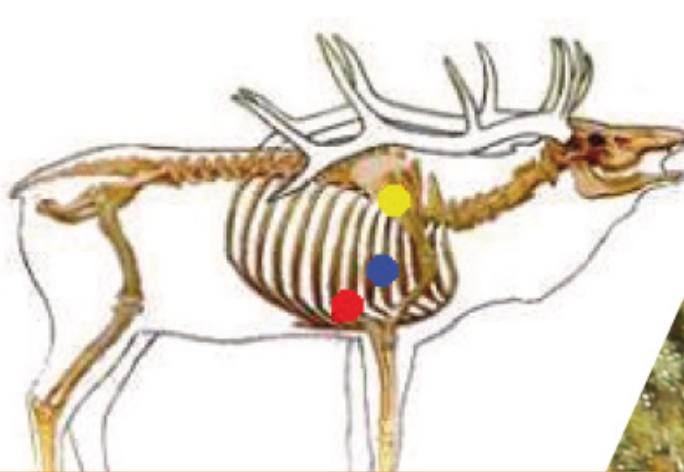
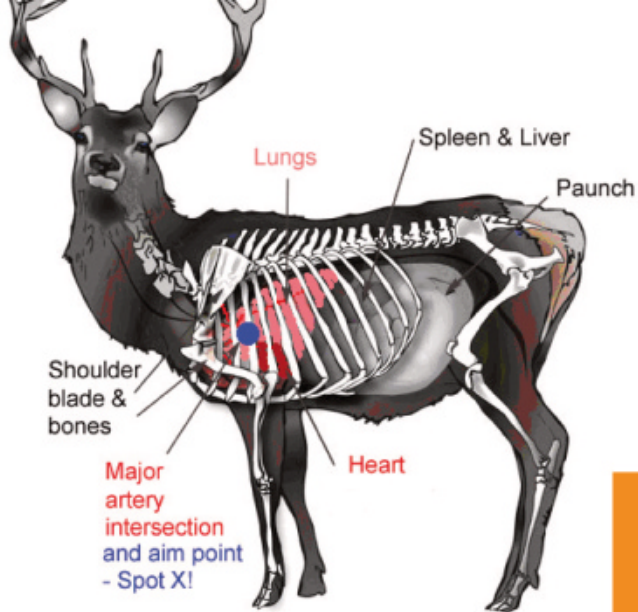
As you're out there getting stuck in to possums and the like be sure of killing the animal cleanly. This is something you should always be mindful of from an ethics standpoint, but you don't want to push the envelope with kids around. If it means the critter gets away then so be it, a mangled gut shot hare isn't a pretty picture.

As you move up to big game sit down, show them diagrams and really explain the anatomy to them beforehand. Ideally also while you're gutting an animal you've shot! Make sure they know what you're referring to, especially regarding the three main aiming points on a shoulder shot (depending on the angle of the animal). The middle of the shoulder if they're broadside, the crease behind the shoulder if they're quartering away or the point of the shoulder where the big knuckle is if they're quartering towards you - as well as the base of the neck etc, so that you're confident they understand any references you give them in terms of where to aim.

Lastly and most importantly - don't make their big game hunt a pressure situation.



Leftie Blake had no trouble shooting with the MDT chassis, and you can clearly see the firm cheek weld



The blue dot is spot X. The yellow dot is the high shoulder shot for immediate incapacitation. The red is the heart shot which is to be avoided

Remember to take your elevation (above or below the animal) into account as well



It's not the end of the world if they don't get a shot or if they miss cleanly. Aim for reasonably short-range, prone shots with deer unawares. They'll be feeling a lot of pressure to make a good shot in front of you as well as a whole heap of adrenalin, so try to make it all as relaxed as possible so they can make a clean kill. I'm gonna put my Dad on the spot here – for my first shot at a deer I was wobbling on top of a fence post at about 120 yards with three adults watching with glee, not conducive to success father! (I missed). Ideally you want to set them up to have a few dry fires on the animal first. This gives time for all of the nerves and flinches to dissipate and removes the pressure.

There are two schools of thought as to the hunting situation. I can't tell you which is the way to go, as it depends on your budget, how much hunting you do, and how keen your protégé is.

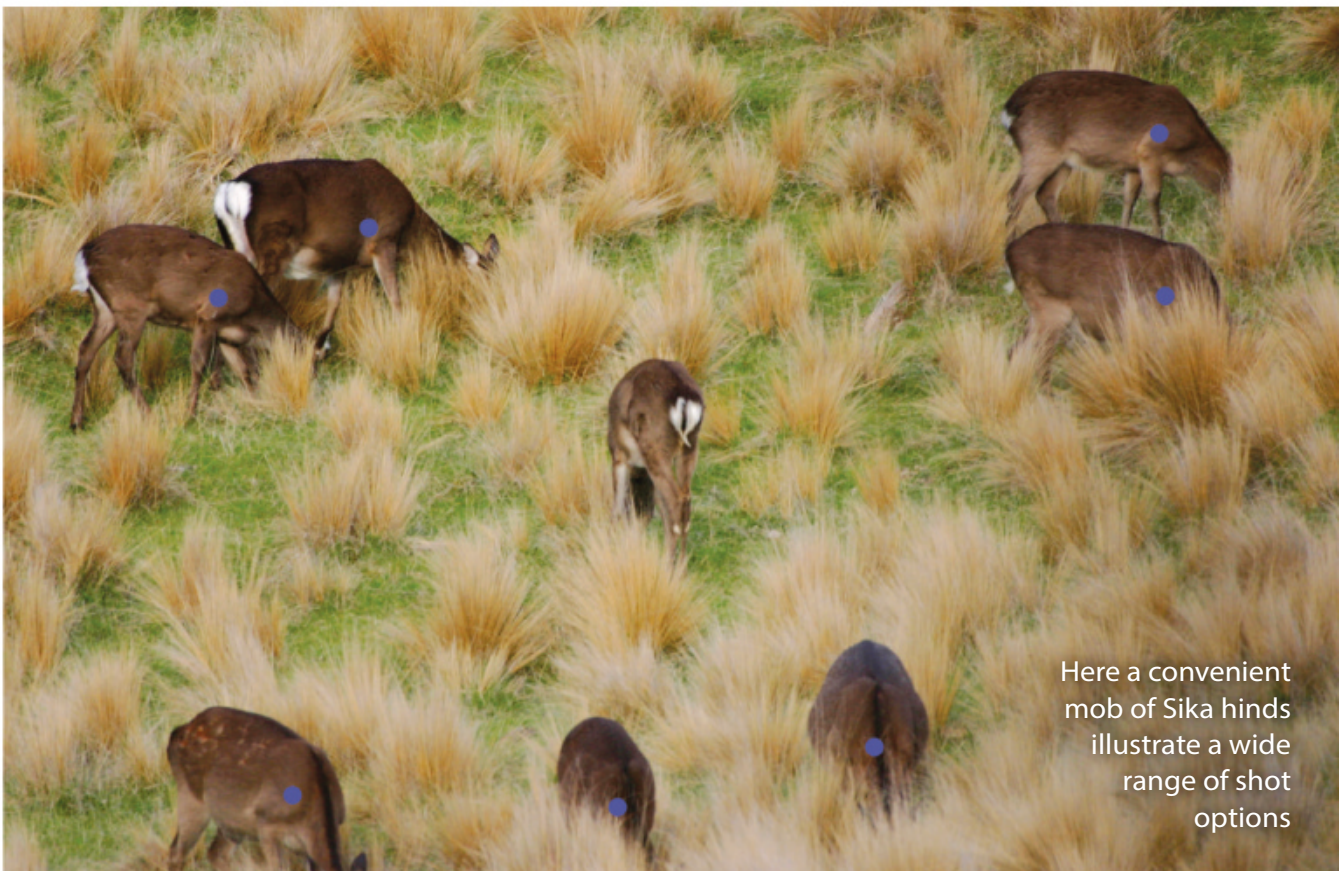
One is to try gain access to a private block with a few deer so that if you blow an opportunity you can just go again and keep them interested. If you're trying to set someone up for a lifetime of hunting, then it's a solid option to pay the money for somewhere like Ngamatea, they'll learn so much in a short space of time - and who knows, you might too!

The other school of thought is that a high opportunity hunt like that will give them an unrealistic expectation. The lure of getting that 'first animal' might be the drive they need to hunt public land. Shooting an 'easy' deer or two on private land may mean they have a real shock to the system when they get out in to the forest parks with you, and having already 'ticked the box' they might not want to continue putting in the extra effort required.

Either way, it is hugely rewarding introducing people to the sport, coaching their hunting and shooting and getting them their first deer. I've been lucky to guide several people on to their all-important first and the feeling never gets old. The future of hunting is with the next generation, so we really have to make an effort in taking kids out and making sure they love the outdoors as much as we do. Make it fun, share your passion!



These two Sika stags facing towards us require aim points in front of the legs to angle the shot in to 'Spot X'. The right hand stag is a perfect example of the point of the shoulder aim point for a quartering toward you animal



Here a convenient mob of Sika hinds illustrate a wide range of shot options

Blake Hamilton with his goat, taken with a confident neck shot at 80 metres





BIG WESTLAND BUCKS

AND A ROGUE BULL

WRITTEN BY - JARROD NICHOLSON

It was early January, and well and truly time to burn off the spoils of the Christmas/New Year period

A quick phone call to Dion revealed he was keen for a four-day fly-in alpine hunt. The weather forecast looked kind; we would be accompanied by some very warm and settled weather. A couple of days later we left Southland, and after a lengthy drive, arrived at

Haast Heli. Pilot Scott greeted us and was very helpful in helping us to choose an appealing-looking valley.

It was a calm, clear morning so we wasted no time in getting our gear weighed and loaded into the R44. As we departed Haast and headed towards a rugged ridgeline expectations were high, and we were keen to lock eyes on some of the local chamois population. However, this was

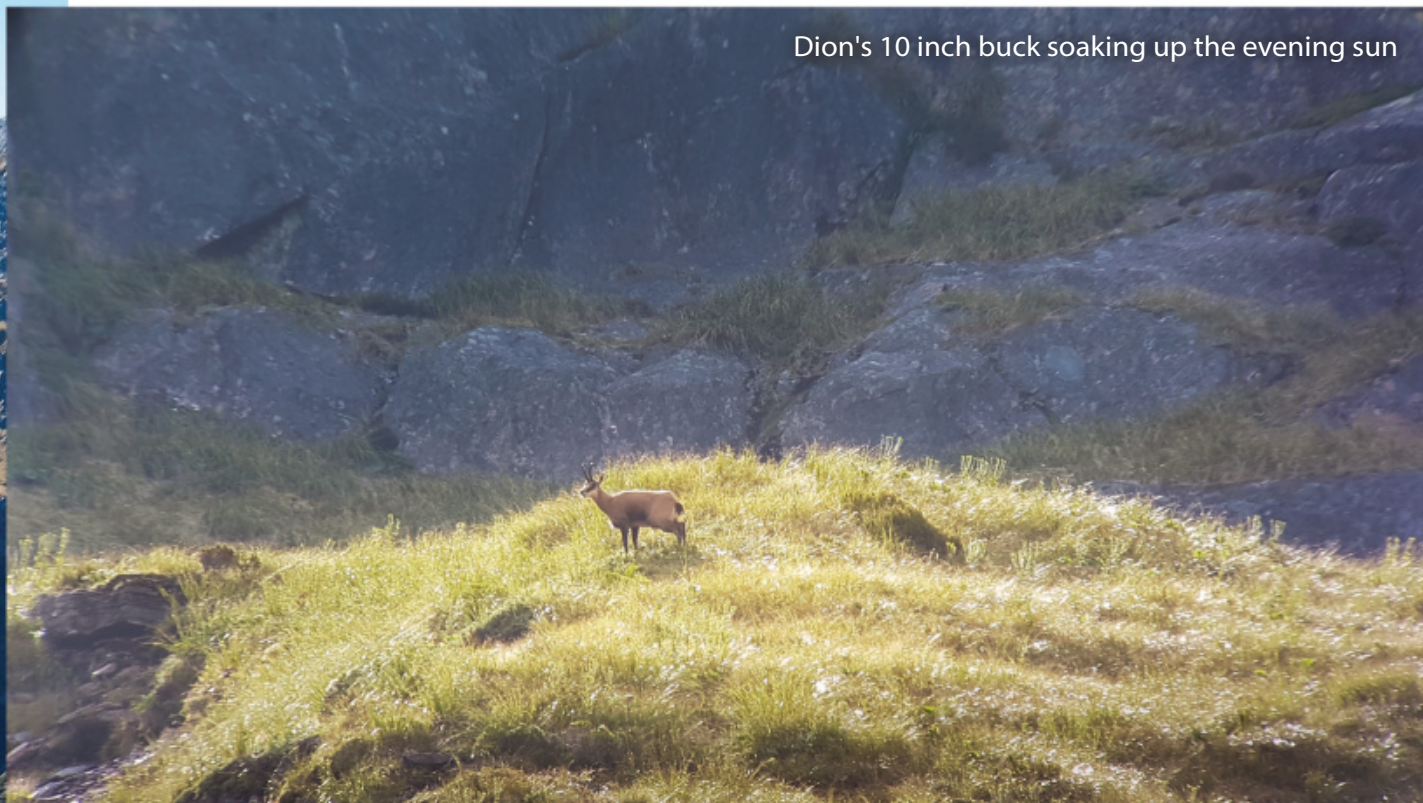
not to be, as we were soon dropping into our chosen watershed. We had opted to land at a lower altitude in case the animals were seeking refuge in the jungle-like scrub. As the buzz of the R44 faded we eagerly began to pitch our tents and get camp in shape. It was already clear that forgetting sandfly repellent might have been a bad mistake!

We soon saddled up our daypacks and headed upstream, covering two kilometres of riverbed before we reached the ridge we planned to climb. **The ascent was short and sharp, and we were soon at the top bush edge**, planning to glass from height to make use of the shade cast by the beech trees. It wasn't long before my binos were locked onto a lone chamois in the head of a side



The view towards the head basin from the main ridge

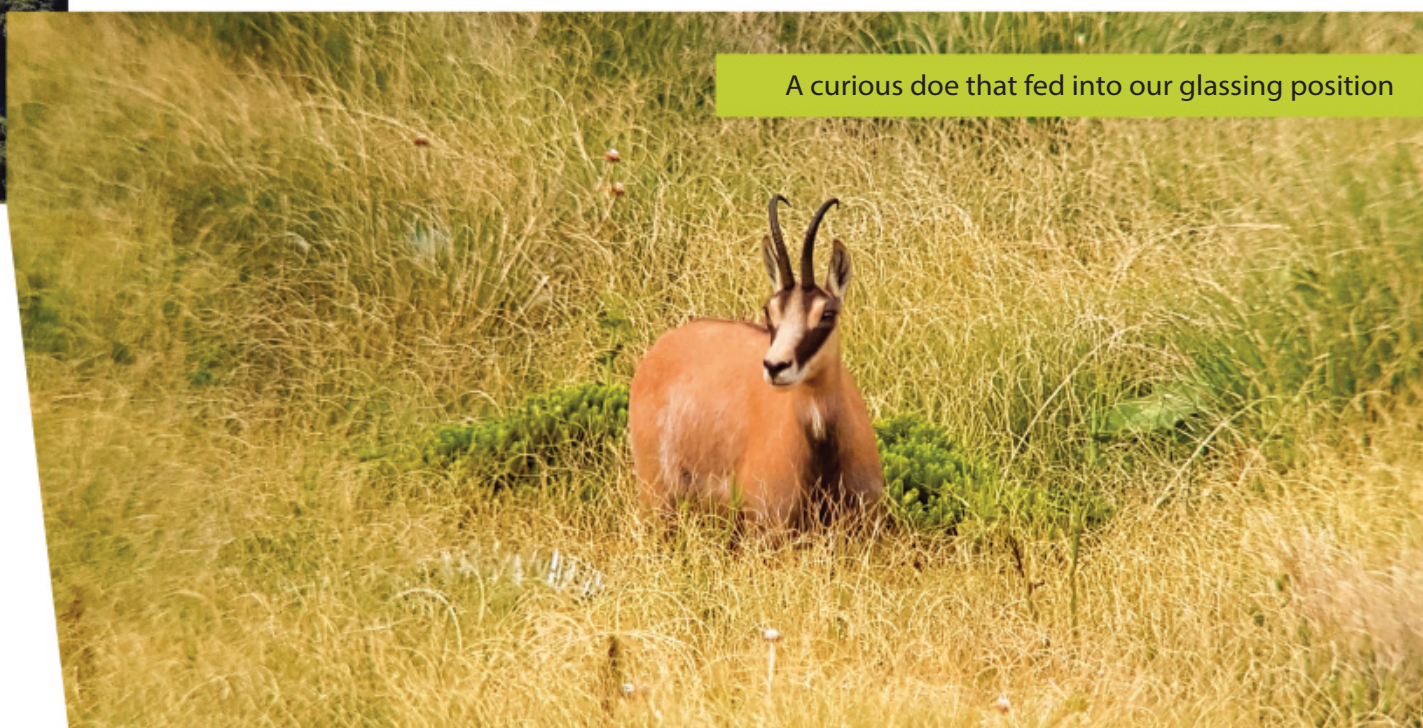
creek. The spotter confirmed that we were looking at a very nice buck. Very quickly we noticed that his erratic behaviour wouldn't do us any favours in planning a stalk. **Dion was up first, so I opted to stay in my current position as he would be out of sight for the entire pursuit.** An hour ticked by, and the chamois was now out of sight so I tracked Dion to his last known location and, as he approached, I frantically scanned for the buck. As Dion crested the ridge, the buck was fleeing for the saddle. A well-placed shot was rewarded with a mature animal on the deck. Dion wasted no time informing me of the good news; I hadn't even heard the shot of the suppressed .308. As Dion dealt with his buck, I charged off in his direction.



Dion's 10 inch buck soaking up the evening sun



Dion's buck where he came to rest



A curious doe that fed into our glassing position

The chamois hooks looked even more outstanding up close. We soon had the tape out and it rolled round to 10 ¼"! **Dion was absolutely over the moon with his first chamois buck.** We both agreed that having an animal of this quality on the ground on day one meant that anything else that was to happen on this trip was a bonus.

It was a slow return trip over wet, slippery river boulders and 11.30pm by the time we got back to camp. A cooked meal felt well deserved and we were soon in bed awaiting day two.

DAY 2

With the success of the previous day, and very hot weather forecast, we decided on



We left it until 9pm to start traversing along the steep scrub covered ridge. As we negotiated the last section of ridge before dropping down towards the bush, we managed to spot several animals on the opposite side of the valley. **Their summer coats were doing them no favours in the last of the sun's rays.** Time was slipping away as we started the final descent to the top bush edge. It wasn't long before I spotted a likely looking subject standing on a rock up a steep side creek, and with my binos soon saw that I was looking at a mature-bodied bull tahr. Surprised to see a tahr this far south the spotter was swiftly dragged out to look him over. It didn't take long to decide he was a shooter,

a leisurely start. We arose mid morning and with breakfast duties out of the way we spent a few hours spotting from camp, picking up a family group of does and kids. We decided to travel south down the main river and hunt another side creek. **After spotting a few more chamois, it was apparent they were living high with no sign in the creeks, so we picked a gnarly ridge and settled in for a two-hour grunt.** There was a sense of achievement when we finally broke the top bush edge as we had successfully managed to manoeuvre around several nasty bluff systems in the bush. A lunch of salami, cheese and crackers

never tasted so good! **The final kilometres of the ascent brought us out on top of a main ridge** (1640 metres) overlooking another vast head basin. It felt like an eternity before we spotted our first chamois from this position but as 7.30pm rolled around the hills came alive. A family group fed no more than 70 metres from us with one doe becoming quite photogenic; another doe caught our attention on the far side of the basin. We estimated her to be well into the 10" range. However, she was accompanied by a kid so she was safe from us.



Dion and his bull tahr



Looking down-valley



My 9 3/4" buck from Day 3



Final measure before the euro mounting begins



Camp trophy rock

and we were soon closing the distance, managing to get 80

metres away for a very steep downhill shot. Before we got down to business, a game of paper, scissors, rock was played for shooting rights, with Dion being victorious. The shooting position was very awkward because of the nature of the terrain. Not seconds after I whispered **"squeeze gently"** the crack of the 150g silenced the valley with the bull anchored on the spot. Arriving at the scene, the usual photos were taken, and out came the tape, with the bull falling shy of 13" by an 1/8th of an inch. Dion's second tahr was about eight years old and an absolute ripper. The descent through the bush was loaded with daypacks full of meat and plenty of satisfaction. It was another late night pondering over two hard-earned trophies, and plenty of banter given about how far Dion would have to walk to shoot a bull or buck of that calibre again.

DAY 3

The final day dawned a cracker and we were welcomed by another beautiful, clear West Coast day. There was a little more urgency to get going as it was our last full day of hunting. Eager not to waste any time, we planned over breakfast to hunt another side creek where we had spotted a large-bodied solo chamois from our glassing spot the previous night. We settled into river travel making good time on the slippery boulders. Arriving at our first real glassing spot mid-morning it was only moments before we spotted the first buck of the day. Out came the Swaro spotter and for the second time on this trip we were looking at a very mature animal. While watching him we took the opportunity to have lunch as we had plenty of time on our side. Deciding that I would take

this buck I set up my 338 Edge and ranged him at 640 metres. After a lengthy process trying to get on top of the gusty wind I decided it was bordering on an unethical shot so, with plenty of daylight left we decided to close the distance. The buck was surrounded by jungle-like alpine scrub, and the only route toward him was climb the ridge to the north, traverse a head basin and come down on top of the buck. It took 1.5 hours to break out into the head basin with a couple hair raising moments along the way. As we got close to the intended shooting position the call was made to trade the 338 for Dion's 308 as the range was likely to be under 200 metres. **Arriving at our shooting position the chamois was nowhere to be seen and with the wind still gusting in our faces, I was confident he was bedded in the scrub below.** Two hours ticked by with no sign of the chamois and we started to think he had moved on. Suddenly he appeared 200 metres below us and I found myself settling in behind the 308. Squeezing the trigger, the buck slumped to the ground. On arrival it was clear we had a slight communication error on the distance the gun was zeroed at, as the 150g had hit the buck right in the spine and wrecked the summer head skin we were after. Bugger! I was still absolutely over the moon as the buck measured 9 3/4" - a personal best to date. After plenty of photos and a butchery session we had to get a move on to get down our steep scrub-covered ridge before dark. The next three hours back to camp were anything but easy but nothing was going to break our spirits after another fantastic day on the hill.

The West Coast had turned it on for us, it was hard to believe how quickly three days had raced by. The R44 was turning up in the morning to take us back to civilisation.

Until next time!





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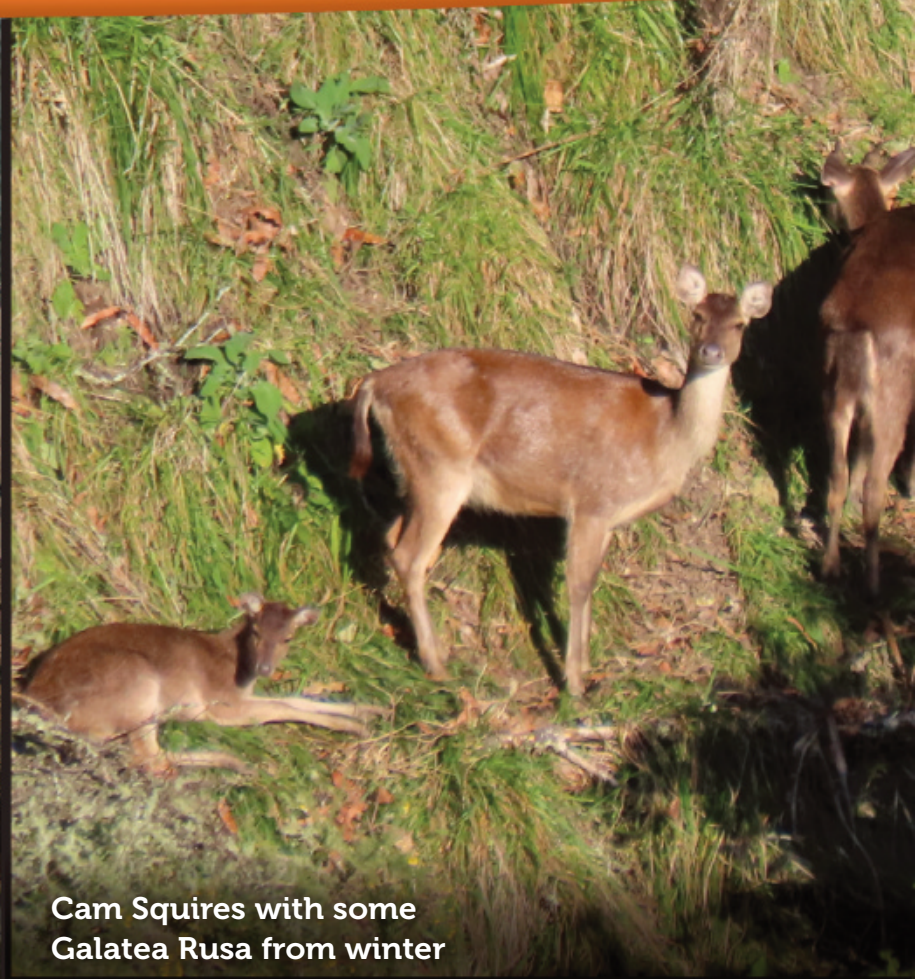


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Simon Evans found this lost stag
on the rocks at Kaka Point



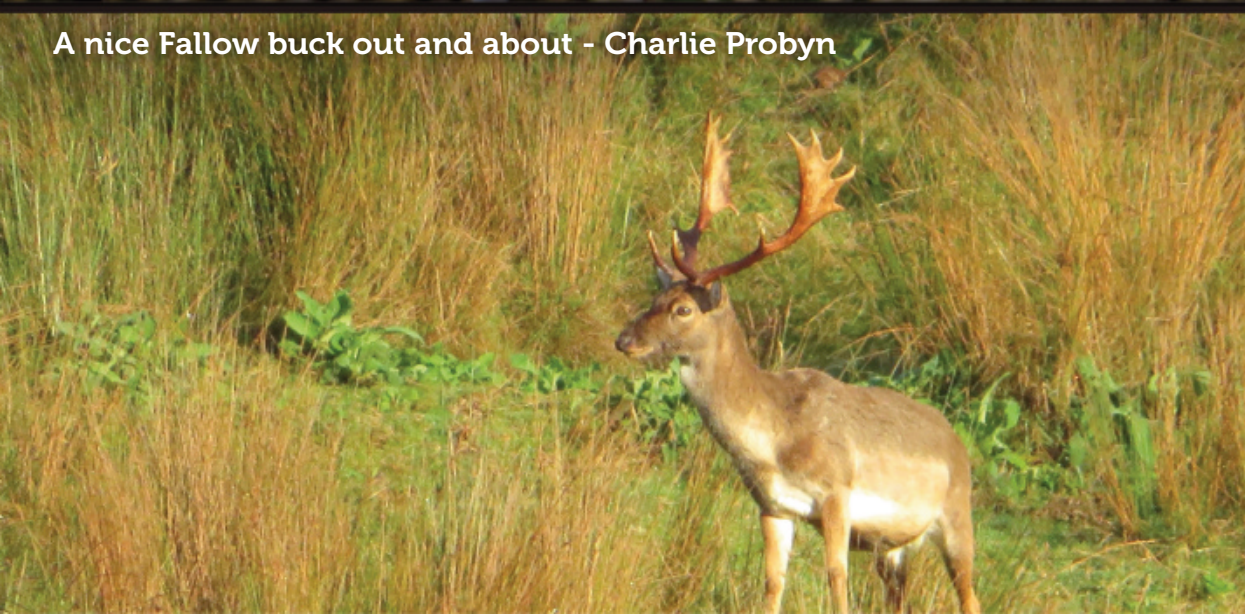
Cam Squires with some
Galatea Rusa from winter



Walked onto this Stewart Island buck while tramping - Peter Cooper



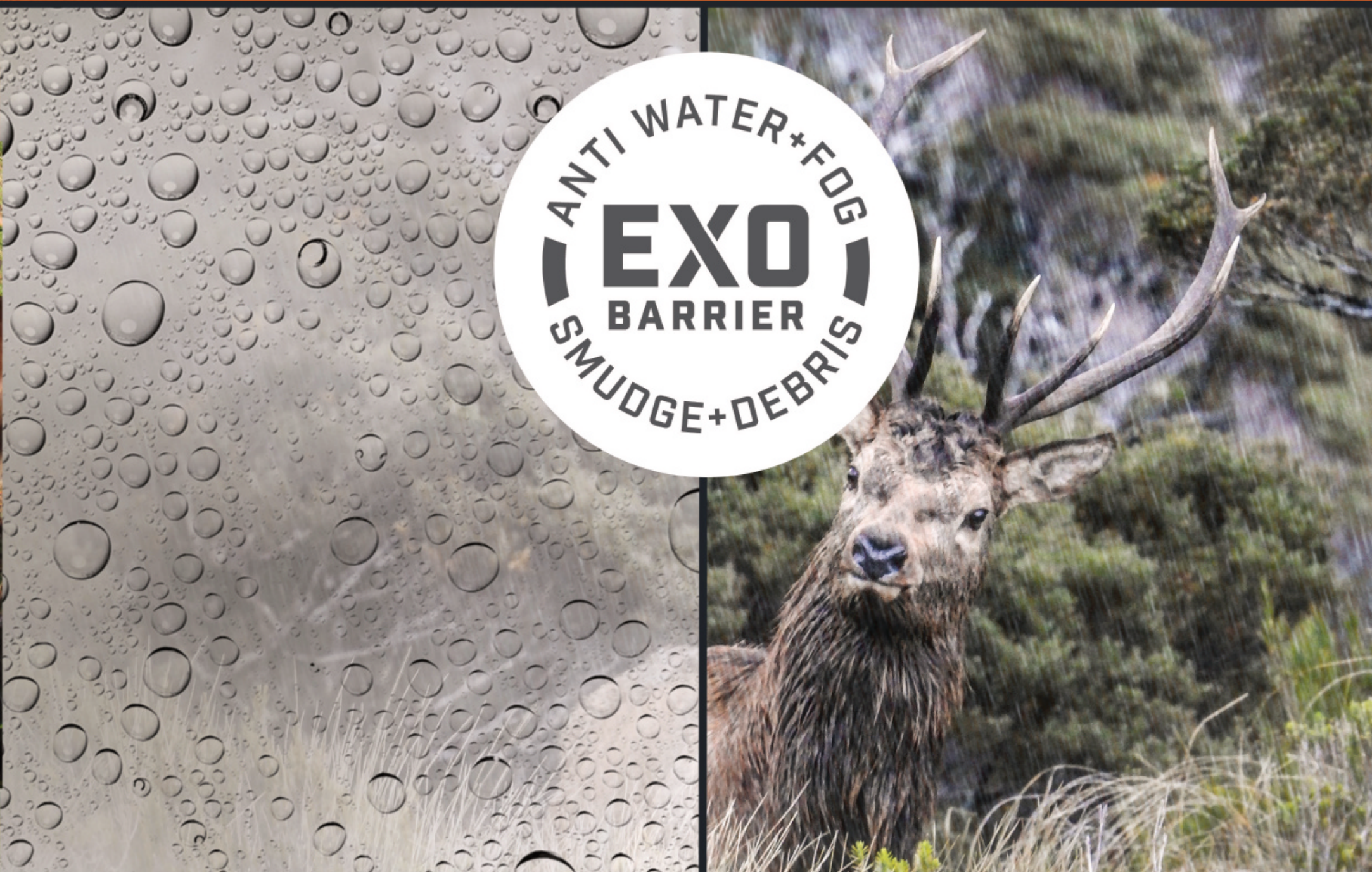
Rob Stevens - A big old boy chewing
the cud and looking pretty tired



A nice Fallow buck out and about - Charlie Probyn



Thomas Forbes found a bull with a
damaged horn in full winter cape



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WRITTEN BY - CODY WELLER

OPPORTUNITIES COME WITH GROWTH

Coastal slips will start to show signs of spring growth early

It's possible that spring time is one of the best times of the year to get your first big game animal with the bow, some of our horned varieties or chase some venison for the freezer

Spring growth is like candy to animals and after what could be one of the wettest winters on record, along with some very cold weeks, you can bet that there will be some hungry mouths out there.

WHY

So, what makes spring time so good? It's the availability of new growth. As we all know, during winter vegetation becomes dormant and its value as food decreases. But the rigours of winter require an increase in energy consumption in animals. This can start to lead into a body condition deficit by the end of the winter. As hunters, we know that feeling - just like living out of your pack for ten days with only the food that you can carry. It's going to get you through, however the feast of a pub platter at the end of the trip is going to get hammered once you are out of there.

A nice sun-soaked clearing is the platter at the pub for a deer.

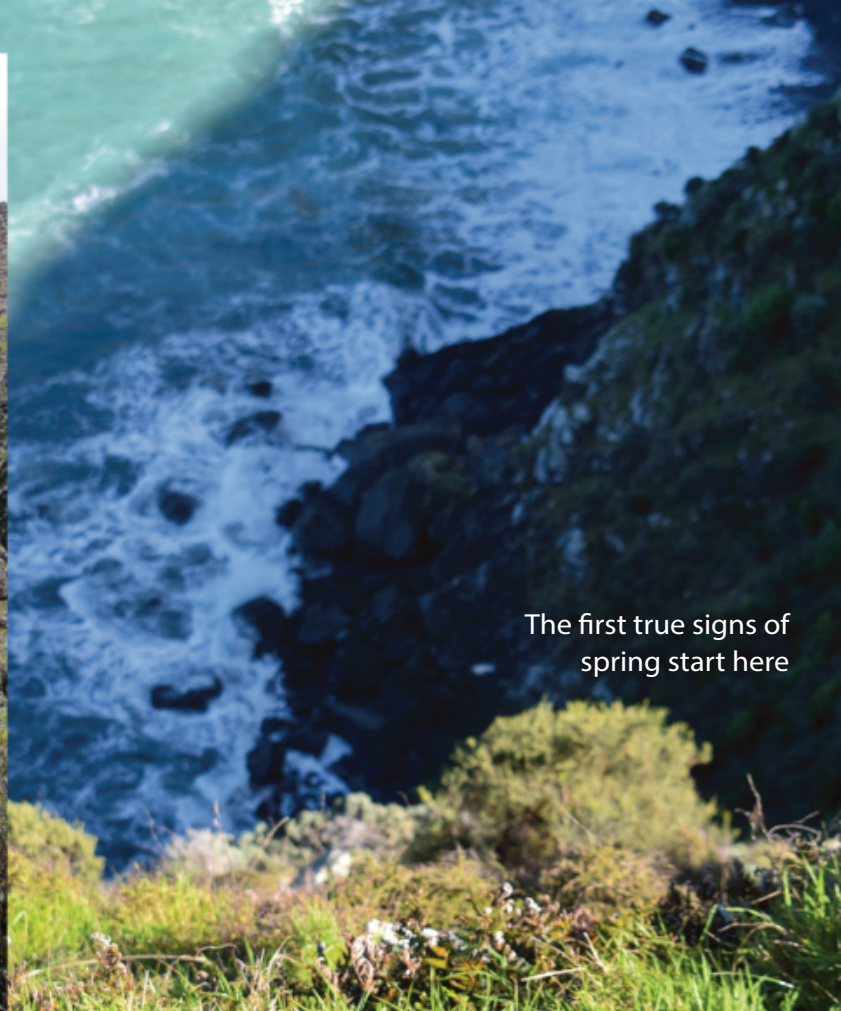
This is what makes hunting so good now. Animals get wrapped up in feeding with their heads down and can often get caught out. This is true for all animals across the board. **People often start seeing goats everywhere, but the goats have always been there - they are just more visible as they constantly look for new growth.**

Hunters talk about "Lowvember" for tahr because, just like other animals, they are pushing down for that fresh pick where it first appears, down low. In general, it's time for animals to feast.

WHERE

Clearings, open creeks and slips, river flats and terraces are all good starting points. This is where light and warmth start the first growth at lower altitudes and slowly creeps up through the contours as the weeks tick by into summer. Clearings, creeks and slips make for easy stalking compared to quietly moving through the bush during the depths of winter. It's much easier to watch a clearing or slip than sidle a bush face. **I don't know anyone who doesn't enjoy sneaking their way up a creek with good feed in the evening.** All the little twists and turns, and poking your head around the next little bit to see who's home. With the sound of the creek trickling away to help cover any sound you make, often it's only a matter of time and you're going to catch something out. Spring hunting at its best right there.

Animals become more predictable so a clearing with plenty of sign on it is very likely going to be a hotspot in the evening due to that new growth. The thought of other animals getting to that fresh growth before them must play on



The first true signs of spring start here

Spring green making its way into the high altitude country

their mind, plus the drive to get condition back is high. Again, animals have spent all winter slowly losing body weight. Some animals have their offspring to grow and feed, some have hair to lose and regrow or bone and antlers to produce. The race to be in good shape for the next breeding season and next winter is on.

All species of animals can be found out in the afternoon much earlier than normal during spring. When bowhunting, this can give you more time to make a stalk and the same goes for the mornings. **That first hour in the sun feeding and warming up is often a trap for the animals.** Their thick winter coats have started to change, and are no longer as efficient at keeping out the cold night air. It's probably like going from a four season sleeping bag to a three and then having a cold snap. You can find yourself standing at camp in the sun with a hot brew when that first sun hits.

It's the time of year when yearlings can get kicked out by the hind. For the most part, the males get kicked out for

good, and hinds and yearlings tend to join back up sometime after the fawn is born.

However, during this period of time, yearlings can be found doing silly things with no old hind to guide them along. Sometimes

a mob of youngsters can be found out far too early with no one really paying any attention to their surroundings. This is perfect BBQ collection time - nothing quite like yearling backsteaks on the BBQ. That's why many people go out and stock up on venison for the freezer at this time of year. Yearlings do tend to be lean as winter can take its toll on their smaller bodies, plus their bodies are growing rather than putting on condition.

But tender young venison can't be overlooked and you can always add more butter to the hot plate!



WHEN

Spring growth can be hunted right up until Christmas as it follows the altitude levels. Just like the animals, a hunter can target specific areas following the growth. For example, I will hunt coastal areas for various species in early September - deer, pigs, goats. Then as the growth moves inland, I can refocus on chamois or maybe head south for tahr. Spring can be hunted for longer than the first month as we know it.

Sometimes I've jumped the gun on spring in the high country. I remember



The motley spring coat on a Red deer starts to let in the cold night air as the being to moult



Venison during spring can be lean early on, however it's still excellent eating



The chamois buck that I shot during a spring hunt

heading into a chamois area in late October thinking I'd be onto them as they hit growth. But this particular year, things were a little slow growing and the place was a ghost town. **Come mid-November and it was a totally different story.** Chamois could be found dotted about the place getting stuck into the feed. Sometimes it's a matter of learning altitude and if it's been a bit cold, giving the country an extra few weeks can make a big difference to animal numbers and what has moved into an area.

It pays to be prepared for four seasons in one day. I have done trips on Labour weekend into the Marlborough high country and had 25°C one day and snow covering the tent the next. Just last year, some mates and I did a tahr trip down to the West Coast. As the chopper pulled away from camp, you could have sworn it was a winter tahr ballot block. It definitely pays to be prepared for hot and cold. I think there can be less hunting pressure in some areas, sometimes giving you the first look at the country since winter. The stags have cast their antlers, trout fishing has opened, the snapper are spawning - so many other things grabbing hunters' attention, but there can be good opportunities to find good quality horned species that New Zealand has to offer. **For the most part, animals will have scruffy coats as they change into a summer coat.** Deer and chamois can actually be very hard to spot at this time of year, as their mottled colour acts as great camouflage. So, it pays to be extra thorough as you go about your hunt - they might be there but just damned hard to see.

Wind can be hard to negotiate in spring and sometimes it can blow for weeks. The equinox brings windy days; these aren't ideal bowhunting conditions as swirling wind very quickly ruins any chance of getting close. Wind is something you just have to work with as best you possibly can. I try to study wind direction the day before a hunt. **This determines where I can go and how best to approach areas within my place of scope.** So if, for example, a NW wind direction was forecast, I would only try areas that faced that direction. Obviously, if you are in a massive valley that's completely facing the wrong way, you're in for a tough day. But sometimes you catch a run of workable wind, so you just have to use it for as long as possible.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Thinking back to mid-spring a number of years ago, evidence of the season had spread its way into a little chamois area I'd been spending

a bit of time in. It would take me about two hours to walk in and check it out. Some kilometres later, I was in the chamois zone working my way up a creek to get into the next set of flats and terraces. Popping up over into the next lot of country, I was immediately shrinking back into cover. **Four chamois were cruising well ahead of me and one was a reasonable buck.** It was go-time. But they were all unsettled, almost knowing they shouldn't be down here but the food was just too good. I couldn't do much but just watch. After a while, they moved off way up into a side creek.

By now, the breeze had come up and they had settled back into a pretty stalkable area.

First I had to climb my way up through the steep face to get above them in order to get high enough to sidle through above their location then drop in from there. Keeping an eye on them as I went kept me in touch with their movements. When I was directly above them, I just had to sneak my way down the little guts and creeks they were feeding in. Next thing I know, I'm pulling my rangefinder out - 45m - shoot for 25m, is the instruction I get. I had to do it twice just to re-check the angle. It was steep, so I hardly had to adjust my sight from its usual 20 metres. The chamois were still happily feeding, unaware of what was about to happen. After the arrow impacted, the nice buck bolted away but it was all too late. **His dash for safety only lasted another 40 metres before he was done. I had myself a nice buck all thanks to that spring growth which had these animals out and about, so maybe it's worth investigating a few areas, old or new.**





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Carol 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 from Carol. After a three-minute stare down the stag moved off and out of sight. Unfortunately the stag never gave Carol an opportunity to draw her bow before it moved away. While a shot hadn't been fired it had truly been a memorable experience.

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My Sirui tripod. A good design for weight but you can imagine how much less stable the tall centre strut is compared to the Leupold on the next page

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

Part 8

WHAT CAMERA SHOULD I BUY

CAMERA ACCESORIES – THE END

The 'What Camera Should I buy' series is drawing to a close. Having covered cameras and the details around them, I want to finish on some of the accessories available

The sky is the limit with camera equipment, but I wanted to go over a few of the extras I consider essential. Most of these are equally applicable to photography or videography.

FILTERS

If you look on the front of your camera you will notice a fine internal thread. This is for mounting filters. These are extra layers of glass that confer a range of properties, the most common being CPL, ND, UV or effect filters.

A CPL, or Circular Polarising Filter, is like polarized sunglasses for your camera. Great for photos in bright sunlight, trying to see into the water, or in the snow – though as a function of this it will increase the saturation of colours and can introduce more vignetting.

ND (Neutral Density) filters are like sunglasses without the polarizing. They bring down the brightness of a scene, allowing your more flexibility for the big 3 - so you can use a wider aperture for example. Or trying to take a long exposure photo in the daytime, say of a waterfall. Without an ND filter it would just be overexposed. Some film cameras, like the FS5 Willie and Emil use, have

inbuilt ND filters where you can select from three degrees of darkening.

The range of 'effect' filters is endless; some adding in a graded darkening effect, some adding colour, some even adding faux star twinkles. The most in-your-face example I see of this is old episodes of Top Gear! Note the really darkened/coloured skies in some landscape shots they use to add a bit of mood.

What I consider essential is at least a UV Filter. It reduces ultraviolet light but actually does very little in terms of camera performance on a modern camera, though it may provide a little extra contrast in some situations. They were originally for protecting film but they've stayed really popular as they're basically an inert lens protector. Like the screen protector on your phone. They'll stop you scratching the front element of your expensive lens, either from direct contact, or when you wipe the bits of sand and dust around on it

with a dirty lens cloth. I also don't use a lens hood because I don't like the extra bulk, but they are good at shielding the front element of your lens somewhat so a filter helps to counteract that loss of protection.

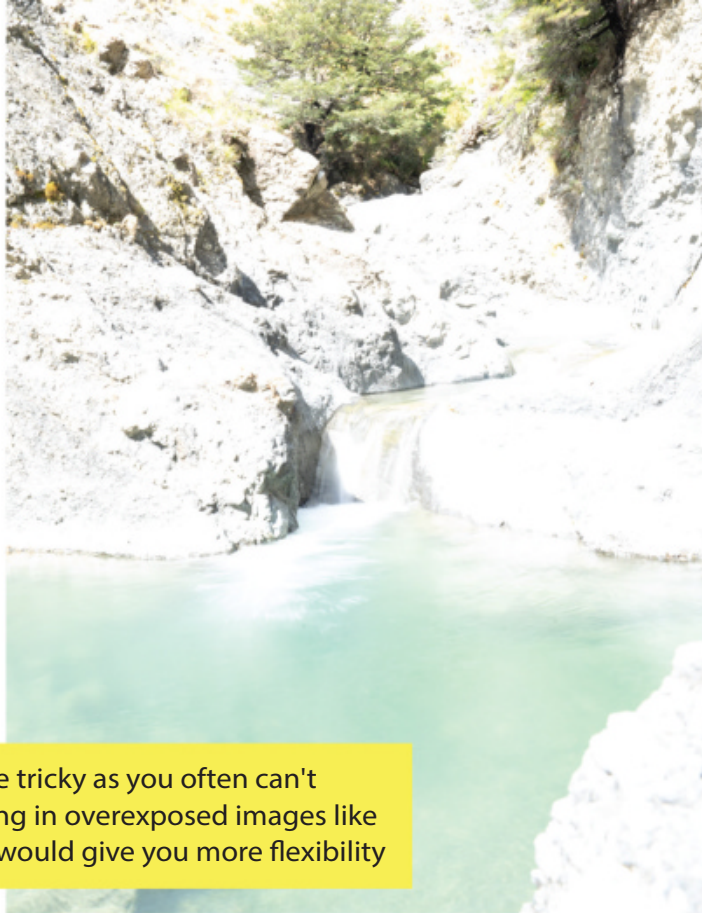
Adding glass to the front of the lens is serious though, if you've invested good money in your camera then there's no

A Hoya UV filter on my 28-75mm Nikkor lens. If you look closely you can see all of the dust and grit that would otherwise be on my lens!





Daytime long exposure shots are tricky as you often can't restrict the light enough, resulting in overexposed images like photo on the right. An ND filter would give you more flexibility



Tripods with the classic shape where the legs meet below the ball head are the most stable, which is absolutely crucial for using a spotting scope in the wind

sense in cheaping out on the filter. It's like putting a cheap scope on a Sako. A poor filter will inhibit up to 5% of available light, soften images and decrease contrast. Even the best filters run the risk of introducing flare. Stick to the big brands like Nikon, Canon or Hoya and if you have great conditions and a need to top notch photos (like being wrangled into photographing a friend's wedding) then just take the filter off.

TRIPOD

A tripod is an important piece of kit, and essential if you're on your own or filming. For still photography with a smaller camera you can get away without it, but you're likely going to need a tripod for your spotter or superzoom anyway.

So, for a piece of kit that you carry on every trip everywhere, you want it as light as possible. As with all things, there's a balance to be achieved. Tripods come in either aluminium or carbon fibre (okay they come in wood too, but come on ...). Carbon fibre is definitely the best option, they're far more stable for an equivalent weight.

I have a Sirui, one that would be equivalent to the current model Traveller 5C. This is a good blend of weight and affordability but there are much better options now. This design, with the strut heading up from a central point where the legs meet, is efficient for weight because the legs can be shorter to achieve the same height as a classic tripod shape. You only need one length's worth for a part of it (the strut) not three equivalent lengths on each leg. These aren't as stable as the classic tripod shape with the ball head mounted directly at the hinge of the legs. With these style there isn't the single pole waving around, it's especially noticeable when filming in wind. The classic shape is much, much better.

Our current favourite is the Leupold Alpine tripod. It is more stable, lighter and has a better ball head system than the Sirui with a lever rather than a knob. Big heavy spotting scopes can exert a lot of force and I have to really crank up the tension on the Sirui to hold them, which is difficult with cold or gloved fingers. Other options are Spartan, Slik or Manfrotto - all better than the Sirui given the classic shapes.

Another tip for maximizing stability is to extend the legs from the top down. I always used to go from the bottom first, so that the remaining adjustment is close at hand, but Greg rightly pointed out to me that by doing that you are using the thinnest and least stable leg sections first.

QUICK ACCESS CLIP

Quick access is key to getting good photos. You could have the world's best camera but if it's safely tucked away in your pack all the time you won't get the world's best photos. One option is to have it on a strap around your neck, but stuff hanging off my neck absolutely does my head in. it's uncomfortable and always swings forward when you bend over, usually lens-first in to a big rock!

The best system for carrying a camera is the Peak Designs clip. Emil bought me one for my birthday years ago and it changed my life. It slides over your pack strap and you slide a special tripod plate in and out of it, you can even operate it one handed. It keeps it safe right up by your chest, adjacent to binoculars, and handy for quick, easy access. If there's one thing that will guarantee you to get better photos it's this.

It works best for ICE or superzoom cameras, as the lens'

weight allows it to hang from the tripod plate. Compact cameras can just be slipped into a pocket or belt pouch.

Cotton Carrier is another brand, it uses a broader more comfortable looking plate but it also uses its own harness, like a one-shouldered binocular harness which is more bulk than I think necessary.

The PD clip does get a bit maxed out with full frame cameras and big heavy glass. My Nikon is as big as I'd ever go for a backcountry camera and that causes the clip to bend and wedge a fraction sometimes.

CAMERA BAG

I'm an absolute heathen when it comes to camera bags. I get it, they're a big investment and you don't want to damage them – but cameras are for taking photos! Not living in a padded bag.

My camera is on my PD clip 90% of the time on trips, if it's drizzly or we're pushing through wet scrub I put a little cover over it that was made for binoculars. A light



Here you can see the PD clip attached to my left pack strap. If there's one thing that will guarantee you better photos it's this



Here you can see how easy it is to overexpose with an led light. There is the option for some clever HDR photos with these types of image too



nylon with a bungee outer like a shower cap. **If it's bundled up to go in my pack I use solely a dry bag then I wrap it in a beanie or spare clothes. It's less weight, less bulk and less stuff to get wet.**

If you do feel the need for a bag then in my opinion the flap/button/velcro opening ones are better than zip only. They're slow to open and prone to jamming up. Don't go too bulky, be mindful that they'll just soak up water. Also, cameras fog when there's a change in temperature. The change causes what is effectively dew to form on the glass surfaces like a cold beer on a hot day, this is particularly problematic when it forms



You can see the camera safely tucked inside my left arm, well protected but easily available

on the internal surfaces where a lens joins the body, so the closer you can keep the camera to outside temperatures the better. Padded bags are very good at insulating so the camera will often be steamed up when you go to use it in outside

temps. That's another advantage of always having the camera on your chest, it's always at the right temperature and far less likely to be fogged when you need it most!

The only occasion I use a camera bag is when I'm pig hunting as I don't often carry a pack to use a PD clip with or hide the camera in. I use a compact 40mm lens and the smallest possible bag it will fit in on a shoulder strap so I can move it around when wiggling through tight scrub. That's not a perfect system though and I'm quite keen to explore a custom chest setup like a binocular harness, I'll let you all know how that goes!

FLASH

I've never owned a conventional flash, as I've always had a good Led Lenser headlamp on hand and there's no sense in doubling up!

Led headlamps aren't perfect though, they're a very cold white/blue light and you need to expose carefully to not have wildly blown out highlights. Also be very mindful with video, the frame rate can pick up on the light frequency of an LED causing anything from an annoying flicker that you don't notice on an LCD display screen, to wild intermittent pulses if it perfectly aligns frequencies. Also, play around with angles so that the light isn't from directly behind the camera. By creating some careful shadow you can make the subject look a little less like a possum in the headlights.

If you're doing any studio work then a ring light can be very useful. They create a diffuse light, usually at a nice neutral temperature, and they create a nice circular reflection in a subject's eye.

LENS PEN

The final weapon in the arsenal is a lens pen, basically just a tiny brush.

These are much better than a cloth, as you sweep dust off rather than grind it along the face of your lens (or filter). The fine grains of hard sand that end up on your lens can wreak absolute havoc, this goes for your expensive binoculars too. You should almost never should you wipe the lens, you want to blow and sweep as much as you can off before you're forced to wipe with a cloth otherwise you will irreparably damage coatings and glass.

And that wraps up what ended up being an absolute monster of a series. Thanks for tuning in and feel free to get in touch with any questions, you know where to find us!



Careful exposure, light placement and editing can combine for striking images with nothing but a led headlamp for lighting.

Here's Lucas Dampney and the Howa Mini Action 6.5 Grendel striking again





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WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Recently Johnny Bissell wrote about hunting your feet, hunting locally

As a city slicker this presents several challenges. To be honest, proximity to a shooting range is the number one challenge, let alone finding close viable public land for hunting.

And if you were to believe hunting forums, deer are running wild over farms and public land with not enough hunters to maintain the population. For some of us, actually seeing wild deer on public land is the challenge. My favourite public land hunting spots are typically four to six hours drive from home so require multiple days away.

The nearest spot is a couple of hours away. You know the spot. A jungle. Again, sage forum experts will point to the futility of hunting there. "It's supplejack holding hands" is the common consensus. The other major issue is hunting pressure, or in other words, the likelihood of running into hunters deep into the bush. Scary to be honest, and not my cup of tea. Public land hunting, but not being hunted, is what I prefer.

With a trained indicating dog nuzzling at my feet, and the pressing need to hunt more regularly, I considered Johnny's challenge. I made the call to nut up and actually go. **I settled into the two hour drive early one winter's morning, just after the roar.** This was deliberate as the plan was to bush stalk, with the pup, and

"IT'S SUPPLEJACK HOLDING HANDS" IS THE COMMON CONSENSUS.



Time for an afternoon tea break

hopefully avoid the throng of hunters.

Arriving at 5am, I noted a few trucks in the car park. Head torch on, we worked up the steep track, hoping to make the tops before first light. **As it was my first trip to a new spot, and hunting Red deer for the first time, I opted to take my 50 litre pack, just in case.** It was a bit of a brutal climb, but the pup happily bounded ahead, and started to wind off the track about 30 minutes in. In the darkness I bumped into a couple of ladies running their Vizsla down, and another hiker. This might be busier than I thought.

Reaching the top of the track, Kai immediately winded off to his right, and so off we set. This was his third day of bush stalking, so I wanted to chalk this one up to scouting the area and learning how to work with the dog. Within a couple of hundred metres, we came across fresh sign, and a recently used bivvy. **The terrain was relatively open, and we made our way gingerly along what appeared to be an old trapping trail.** Stopping for morning tea I anxiously looked at the GPS and my chart, carefully noting my exit point later in the day. And then the supplejack started to get thick, really thick.

Kai put his nose to the air, and then proceeded to lead me through a particularly tight section that he scuttled below like a ninja. For the next five minutes I tried to weave my frame through the tangle. The big pack didn't make this easy, but eventually I made it through. We proceeded into a gut about 30 metres long. Kai indicated to

the left up through another section of tight supplejack. "Stuff that" I thought, stupidly ignoring the dog, and signalling him to move ahead of me. That was lazy. He gave me a look, and moved into his place of work, again indicating in the light wind. Stepping over a large dead tree on the ground, suddenly we heard the sound of people talking. We both simultaneously looked at each other in surprise and ducked down. Ever conscious of how busy this particular piece of country could get, and having already seen evidence of hunters, I was just about to call out "hunter" when a young spiker stepped out in the opposite direction, on the clearing where Kai had just been winding ten metres away. **He raised his nose and licked at the air, perhaps still in a bit of a rut?** I raised the rifle from our obscured position, moving from half cock to ready with one movement of the thumb I gently squeezed off a round into his chest. He looked hit and laboured as he ran back up the gut he'd just emerged from. We stared at each other in disbelief. Kai had indicated deer on his first trip and helped me locate a shot hind the next trip to the tops, but this

was the first one we'd both seen up close and personal.

After a good ten minute wait, Kai obeyed my command to move to my side, and we made our way ever so slowly up the gut. We smelt the spiker before we got to him. There he was, dead as a doornail. Our first bush stag - I was stoked. **We spent the next hour processing the deer, and then continued on, meat on the pack frame.** The rest of the day was spent exploring, locating a couple of well-used wallows, fighting supplejack, trying not to get lost, marking likely spots in the GPS and even spooking a hind navigating back to the main track. Making our way down before last light, I was stoked that hunting locally had, much to my surprise, actually worked.

And so we went back. Over the next few months, we gradually explored new areas. All day trips, building pictures of the topography and resident wildlife. We learnt where the deer were, where they weren't, and more importantly where we could actually hunt them. To become more mobile, I trimmed my gear down to a couple of kilos fitting into a Twin Needle Bum Bag. Contents included a small safety kit, and a kill kit comprising a Hunters Element packable meat bag, cord, gloves and small knife. Luxuries include a small alcohol stove, cup, spoon, tea, snacks, head torch, compass, map, and the very useful Katadyn BeFree water filter.

We learnt that promising giant wallow systems didn't hold deer at that time of year. And despite ample pig sign, try as we might, we couldn't locate them. One particularly wet winter's day, tired from hunting since first light,



First Red deer for both of us. Couldn't be happier!



The punga belt the spiker was located deep within



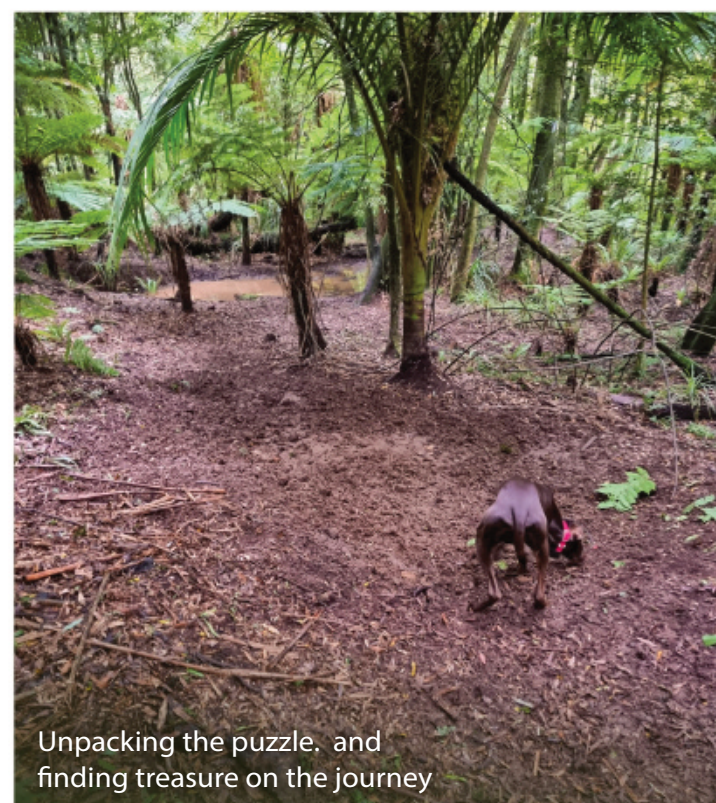
The winter Red hind

a long ridge from a track I'd found. On this trip, I'd spooked a few bedded deer but was cold, tired and a bit frustrated. It was too thick, and I just couldn't get close to the animals. Making my

way down, I decided to head north up a more established track. Looking across the stream I noticed a section of established rimu and kauri. **My friend Thom had mentioned that where you see this, it is most likely to be open hunting.** Committing in my mind to one more hour, I crossed the river, fairly exhausted from the previous eight hours, and marked the new entry point in the GPS. We headed in, and immediately, Kai settled into tracking fresh ground sign.

The bush was relatively open, and quiet under foot. Hmm, "this deserves some focus", I thought. A hundred metres in an excellent section of open bush presented itself to the left, but Kai, sampling the micro currents of wind, opted to turn right toward the river. "Okay, time to trust the dog". Moving along a ridge line, I noticed that Kai had stopped walking ahead to my left, and had locked up, and was tensely looking ahead then back to me. Slowly stepping behind him I looked over his eye line. **Thirty metres ahead, by a stream surrounded by ponga and long clumps of grass, were three deer alert, but focused on the dog.** Raising the rifle, I sent a bullet on the way behind the front hind's shoulder. Off they sped.

Waiting with the pup I reflected on what had been a really challenging day. Bush hunting can be relaxing and yet mentally draining. But things can change quickly, and I was glad we'd tried a new area. Moving to where the deer had been standing, I followed the dog, off in a direction the brain told me was wrong,



Unpacking the puzzle. and finding treasure on the journey

but after all there had been a few deer. He worked the ground for a few minutes until we came to a grass clearing where the mature hind lay. **A few days later, looking at the map, it became clear that this was an area where we could actually hunt deer, and one that deserved more focus next time around.** Lesson learned.

So, hunting my "local" has become something I really enjoy and look forward to. Like other favourite spots, I've found the more boot rubber you put in, the less hunters and the more animals you find. Aldo and I plan to go back and fly camp overnight and push deeper into these promising new areas. Half the fun has been unpacking the puzzle and figuring where the pieces go. Every trip has been a success when viewed through this lens. It's been a real highlight to mix in day trips from the big city, in amongst the epic backpacking trips in faraway places. So, thanks Johnny, you were right to challenge us. **Hey, and we even see the odd deer or pig, so what's not to love?**



I had decided it was time to get back to the main track to head out. We pulled up to a belt of pepperwood, Kai locked up at my side. I walked forward, blinded by the foliage as to what lay ahead. After a few tense minutes I quietly double peep whistled him to move forward, but he remained locked up at my side. Taking matters into my own hands, I pressed forward quietly working my way through. Kai remained behind. "Strange" I thought. With experience, I clicked that this was his "pig tell". I soon busted a group of porkers, and after some less than stellar shooting managed to put one on the deck as they bolted. The sweet and sour pork dish at home was a hit.

We took the "go local" challenge seriously and I even invited my friend Aldo along with his stick bow for a look. A proud Kiwi by way of South Africa, I introduced him formally to a piece of supplejack on the walk in on the track. He told me later in the day that he had gotten so stuck in a section of thick supplejack that he'd ended up pushing his bow and backpack in front of him, crawling along the ground to get out. His words were **"I was close to pushing the button"** referring to his EPIRB. While we laughed about it later, he sent me an image from his Garmin heart monitor software later in the day, which proved the panic was real. I pointed out I didn't find it that bad, but he pointed out that his 6' 5" frame was somewhat different from mine (reverse the numbers).

The last trip was back in August 2021 before we went into what was to become the longest lockdown for many of us. I had spent the last few trips figuring out



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WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

PUBLIC LAND ACCESS

ORGANISATIONS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

Lobbying to maintain and increase public access is a big task, and luckily one we have a lot of support for

This is often through organisations like the GAC, NZDA and even non-hunting groups like the Federated Mountain Clubs and especially the Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa/Outdoor Access Commission

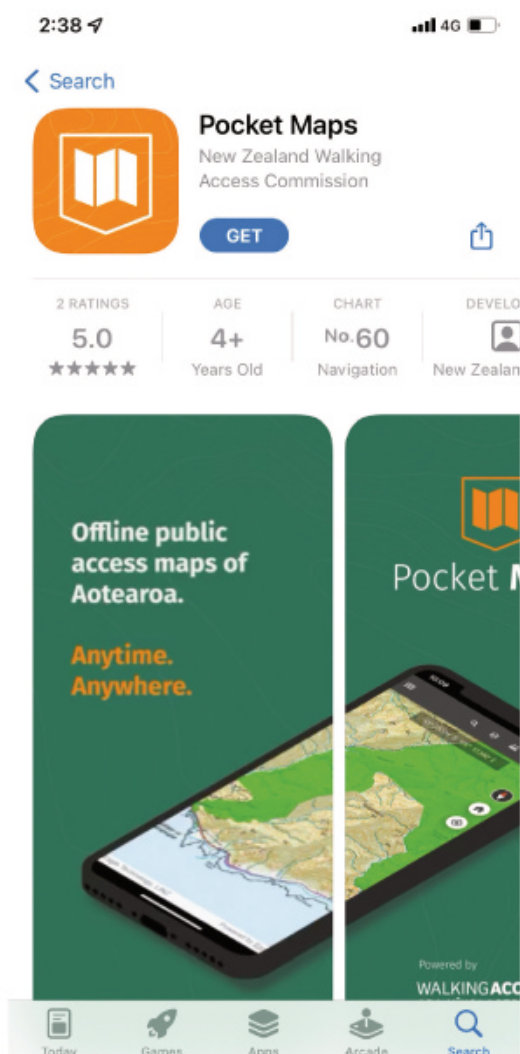
I reached out to NZDA CEO Gwyn Thurlow for his take on the issue and he says that “access is a key theme for

hunters and members of the association”.

NZDA makes submissions to government to ensure the interests of hunters and shooters are considered. We do this locally at a branch level, but also nationally out of the head office based in Wellington.

NZDA is in the fortunate position of having an in-house lawyer who regularly highlights access issues and works to co-ordinate input and responses. This work isn't visible but it goes on every week. Recently large submissions were made on Stewardship Land and Tenure Reviews.

Access means different things – it's not just a locked gate. It's landing permits, it's forestry block permits, it's ballot periods, it's restrictions on when and



where hunting can be done.

Gwyn says he's surprised time and time again that officials don't stop to consider hunters, firearms, dogs, and 4x4 access points and ensure access rights don't cut out hunters.

A recent success on 'access' was the direct result NZDA's submission to DOC to extend the tahr ballot blocks to the full allowable 12 weeks (up from 9) which meant hunters had more landing permits in the Landsborough and Adams Wilderness Blocks. Without NZDA reading the detail of the 1993 Himalayan Tahr Control Plan and making a request, then this type of access

wouldn't have occurred.

Gwyn went on: ***"As an advocate for recreational hunters, it's our job to remind people about hunters and their needs, and to take the time and spend the hours filling out the paperwork, so that hunters rights and interests are advocated for and considered."***

'Hunters are facing the erosion of access. If we don't speak up, either directly, or by joining an organisation like NZDA that has your interests at heart, then we'll lose what we have in the ever increasing urban-based decision-makers. Speak up or be forgotten.'

Herenga a Nuku Aotearoa / Outdoor Access Commission

This is an entity that does a lot of work to protect and enhance public access for everyone, hunters included. Just recently it has lobbied DOC to ensure public access is maintained when it re-classifies its 'stewardship' land. They're also the entity that gets involved with those nasty paper road access issues, and as there are over 50,000km of unformed legal roads in NZ that must constitute quite a bit of work! One of their key functions for hunters is their online map service which tells you precisely where legal access points can be found. I spoke to their media team to get some certainty on a few topics;

Hunters are an important stakeholder for the Walking Access Commission, and they have specific public outdoor access needs. Hunting has important well-being outcomes — connecting whanau, connecting to the outdoors, providing food, exercise and mental wellness, and managing introduced animal numbers. We have many access cases relating to hunting on our case database, and we are in regular contact with the Department of Conservation and NZDA to resolve those issues. These cases can often be complicated — taking a long time to unpick and resolve. Our role is to clarify access and help the parties resolve issues. We do not proactively seek out access issues, so if hunters are aware of problems, they should raise them with us.

Luke - The Raukumara Ranges are a high-profile area currently, though it has very little public access. Only one access point doesn't require crossing private land. Have the Commission ever lobbied for more access in the area, or do you plan to in the



future?

Raukumara Conservation Park has minimal access. The area is overrun with deer and pigs and needs a good pest control strategy to protect its biodiversity. It is also very rugged country for hunters. We do not have any access cases in our database, which suggests that hunters have not been raising access issues to the ranges with us.

In 2020 the Commission successfully advocated through the Overseas Investment Office for new secure public access to the Raukumara Ranges through the Waikura Valley. The new access follows braided riverbanks. It incorporates a route the Department of Conservation promotes for hunting. We achieved this legal access because of good relationships and mutual support between the Commission, the OIO, the new landowners and the professionals who have been working on the project.

Luke - Do you have any tips for individuals or organisations like the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association for approaching landowners to open access or respect existing paper road routes?

Be respectful of private property. Ask first if you're not sure.

When you get your permit from DOC, ask for instructions about the best access to the area where you will be hunting. DOC should be able to advise the safe and legal ways to get to its estate. If it can not, you should contact the Commission. We can clarify the legal access to and over land and help resolve disputes about access.

Luke - Is there any access news pertinent to hunters that you would like to share in this article?

Last year we launched our Pocket Maps app. Pocket Maps, available now via the Apple App Store and Android Play Store, allows you to view accessible areas and public conservation land online with a Wi-Fi connection or downloaded to be viewed offline. Pocket Maps lets you search your exact location by region and, through the map layers, understand what type of access land you are currently on or looking to hunt, fish or mountain bike through. App features include public access area viewing, offline capability, GPS positioning and the ability to draw and measure routes.

Our online maps also have the ability for hunters to download GPX. Downloading the GPX files for the coordinates of those



Owner - Allan Foot

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accessways from our maps means that people can be more confident, even without a phone signal, that they are not accidentally crossing private land.

People can use our maps to draw lines or points over significant areas, tracks and unformed legal roads. Then they can export those drawings as GPX or KMZ lines or points and load them onto their handheld GPS unit or phone. Then, as they walk, they can be more confident they are in the right spot.

Luke - Anecdotally we have heard there have been reductions in public access, especially for hunting, since the introduction of the 2015 Health and Safety act. Would you support that statement? Do you have any statistics or evidence of that?

We do not have any quantitative data showing a reduction in public access because of the 2015 legislation. The law change in 2015 caused genuine confusion and concern among landholders that allowing public access exposes them to liability. However, it has also been a convenient justification for some landholders to say no to access, using health and safety as an excuse. Worksafe's clarification about the legislation is clear that landholders are not liable for the health and safety of recreational visitors on their land. They are not responsible for any harm to a recreational visitor from a natural hazard such as a bluff, river or wasp nest. They are accountable for health and safety risks to visitors arising from work-related hazards such as tree felling or blasting. We regularly communicate that Worksafe clarification to landholders.

The 2015 Health and Safety Act

When chatting to the GAC a man named Sam Newton was mentioned, as he successfully lobbied for the public clarification mentioned above. Working on behalf of the NZ Alpine Club this valuable document clearly removes any ambiguity about preventing access because of the big, scary 'health and safety'.

This clarification goes on to say;

HSWA (Health and Safety Work Act 2015) only applies to recreational access when the land is affected by a PCBU's (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking) work activities or is part of a workplace.

This means a PCBU whose land is being accessed for recreation is:

- **only responsible for risks arising from the work or workplace, and is**
- **not responsible for the risks associated with the recreational activities.**

PCBUs can usually meet their duties to recreational visitors in simple ways (eg using signs, emails, or verbal warnings to let people know about work hazards). These duties apply whether the recreational activities are commercial or not.

The only exception is when the PCBU's business or undertaking also provides the recreational activity. In this case, they're also responsible for managing risks associated with that activity, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Visitors have responsibilities too, regardless of whether there's a legal right of access. Anyone accessing land for recreation needs to follow:

- **any reasonable health and safety instructions the PCBU gives them regarding the work or workplace, and**
- **other reasonable requests (eg shutting farm gates and not frightening stock during lambing).**

HSWA doesn't cover injuries sustained by someone who's accessed land for recreation and hurts themselves as a result of the recreational activity

See the full clarification at;

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/laws-and-regulations/operational-policy-framework/operational-policies/policy-clarification-recreational-access-and-the-health-and-safety-at-work-act-2015/>

So, if you have any questions about public access that Pocketmaps can't answer I would go to your local DOC office or NZDA branch, and if you're having issues that aren't being resolved between parties (as a PCL user or a landowner) you can elevate it to the Walking Access Commission/Herenga ā Nuku. For any clarification about the H&S obligations check out their website, it's as easy to follow as that kind of thing can be!



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A text from Mitchell Ewart in mid-March confirmed that our hunt to Ngamatea Station the following weekend was on

Friday came around quickly and my son Conor, his wife Cady and I found ourselves at the dinner table at the Tiki Bush hut just before dark.

As we ate, a Sika roar pierced the cooling air. This filled us with promise for the next day and dawn couldn't come quickly enough

The early morning red sky had faded as we stepped into the beech forest, which was dry underfoot but not too crunchy. Cady accompanied us - this was her first-ever time along on a hunt and it would be an exciting one. The going was easy as we wove our way through the bush. **Mitchell spotted a movement in a maze of mānuka 70 yards above us and we saw four deer browsing their way through it on the way to their bedding area.** The first three were hinds but tail-end Charlie was a stag. Despite Mitchell's best efforts at calling, the stag just kept on walking, following the ladies.

Conor and Mitchell could see the deer quite well, but in the early morning grey of the bush I struggled, younger eyes having the advantage. Conor would get the first shot.

Pressing on, we dropped down into a small stream, picking up a solid game trail in the process. **It eventually took us to a long narrow clearing, only 20-30 yards wide and stretching uphill from us for at least 120 yards.** Bordered on all sides by dark beech, the slender trees, light scrub and patches of bush lawyer were scattered through its well-manicured surface.

The boys picked up a stag 60 yards ahead. A flick of the white tips of his tops betrayed his position as he moved slowly through the beech above them.

I stayed back with Cady as Conor and Mitchell crawled to the far edge of the



The young stag managed to keep his vitals covered the whole time he was in view

beneath them was a mature stag. His solid frame and thick neck sported a set of long dark antlers. Clearly the younger stag had not been happy to see him.

Attracted by the noise the intruder moved near to where the other stag had been, conveniently into bow range of about 21 yards. With a clear shooting lane Conor drew his bow. The stag caught this movement and ran uphill away from them. Mitchell roared and the stag, uncertain as to what he had seen, stopped in a gap to look back. Still at full draw, Conor hit the ranging button on his Garmin Xero sight, 35 yards. The green sight pin was soon on the stag's chest. Squeezing through the shot, his Mathews VXR spat

out an arrow, striking the stag deep in the chest. It made a din as it crashed down through the bush, then silence. You could have heard a pin drop.

Cady and I slowly eased our way over to the boys. Conor explained the shot and it sounded good, but you never know with bowhunting. The shot may have been fatal but we still had to find it. **After ten minutes we stalked the 35 yards to where the stag had been hit.** Initially there was no blood but some very deep hoof prints indicated a hurried exit. The ground was soft underfoot making the tracks the stag left behind easy to follow. After 30 yards there was still no blood and Mitchell was getting worried. We

clearing. The stag had not seen us so the boys set up in a shooting position. Mitchell's roar was met with a response, and for the next few minutes the stag and Mitchell "spoke" to each other. The animal was a young six-pointer and looking to get an early start on the roar. As this game of cat and mouse played out Conor searched for an opportunity to arrow the stag, however the stag kept plenty of vegetation between them.

Another roar from Mitchell kept the stalemate going, and while the stag was interested he refused to offer Conor a shot, then abruptly moved off.

The sound of a breaking stick alerted the boys as to the reason why. Coming up from heavy cover



A very happy boy with his first Sika



explained to him that often there is little blood for the first 30 to 40 yards given that the animal is travelling at speed and it takes time for the chest cavity to fill with blood before it starts to pour out. **Fifteen yards later was our first blood, a good splash on the leaf litter.** We didn't need to find any more as Conor spotted a patch of the stag's rich coat glowing in a patch of sunlight just ahead. Getting to him he reached down and put his hands on his first ever Sika, and pulling the head around we could see he was a long six-pointer. It was handshakes all round and big hug from Cady. We all were extremely happy as it had been a great hunt.

As a father it was very special to see my son shoot his first Sika. **He was beginning to school me a little now as he had shot four Fallow deer to my one on a trip the week before.**

We had the stag back at camp before midday so there was plenty of time for a well-earned feed and a few shots before heading out again. Conor had tuned

Mitchell's bow after I had replaced the strings on it. We helped him sight it in and get his field points and broadheads hitting the target in the same place. It can take a while to fine tune a bow and much of it has to do with the shooter. A few shooting tips were passed on and soon Mitchell was grouping well out to 40 yards. A little too well for a Sika stag he came across in May but that's another story.

With the sun still high in the sky we headed off again and it was my turn to shoot. Despite the warm day the cool bush helped make the climb a little less unpleasant. Reaching a high beech-covered bench coincided with spotting deer.

Forty yards above us a hind, yearling and fawn were out early, feeding amongst the tangle of small beech trees. Despite the proximity there was no possibility of a shot, as there was too much in the way. The minutes flew by as

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN A DAY THE SILENCE OF THE BUSH WAS DEAFENING

we waited. As this impasse played out the inevitable happened and we were spotted, the shrill sound of a Sika whistle piercing the bush. Despite the noise they weren't sure what we were, as our camo blended well into the surroundings.

The yearling was the most vocal - now facing us it stepped forward into the narrowest of shooting lanes but a lane no less. I raised my binos to check if it was clear as I was concerned there might have been an unseen branch in the way. Like many before me, I had been caught out in the past. When you focus on the animal you can easily miss something which can cruelly deflect an arrow.

I double-checked the range - it was 37 yards. Lowering my rangefinders I took my release from my pocket and hooked it to the d-loop and drew the bow. Lining up the peep with the Garmin Xero's sight housing, I held the illuminated green pin steady on the yearling's chest. Moving my elbow back behind me my hinge release "clicked" - now slowly pulling back against the string the shot went off. Silently the arrow closed the gap, hitting the yearling with a thud. All three deer bolted. Conor and Mitchell thought the shot was good. although we didn't hear the deer fall, and for the second time in a day the silence of the bush was deafening. As we all started breathing again there was squealing from the direction the deer had run, lasting for a few minutes. **I was certain it was the hind squealing at a dead yearling.**

After ten minutes we began the search for blood. As expected from a front on shot there was little, but the bush was extremely open and it didn't take long for Conor to spot the yearling laying dead. As we approached the hind and fawn broke cover 30 yards above the prone animal. This confirmed it had been the hind squealing all along. The yearling was in great condition. Rolling her over I saw the arrow had hit her perfectly in the chest. She had gone less than 70 yards. It had been an amazing day, with two Sika shot with the bow.



The yearling turned out to be my one-hundredth deer with the bow, something which had taken 41 years to do.

This was somewhat of a milestone for me as I hunted for 15 years before I shot my first deer. Riddled with buck fever I blew numerous opportunities during that time as well as experiencing the normal trials and tribulations (crap happens) bowhunters have to deal with.

Two things stood out to me at the time of shooting this young deer. The first was how perfect that particular shot was. Not the fact I hit the deer but just how well I executed the shot. It was textbook perfect. If I had been able to do this during that 15 year dry spell I would have killed 100 deer a long time ago.

Earlier, I was with my son Conor when he shot his first Sika deer, a large six-point stag at that, and he was with me when I shot the hind. It was very special for me to have him there, especially as he carried it out.

On reflection, there are a lot of people that I am grateful for over the last four decades of hunting - those who helped me out directly and those



A great moment for me with this Sika hind

who never knew how much they helped. I would like to thank all those bowhunters who shot deer during that 15 year period who inspired me to keep on trying, to keep heading out into the hills for me to try to shoot a deer. Looking at the hind laying on the ground I was reminded of how much of a team sport bowhunting is, from the coaches I encountered, to the skilled bushmen and bowhunters, friends

and family.

That perfect shot on the hind was a culmination of all of the above. I did that all on my own but I couldn't have done it without the support and help of others.

To say the camp that night was happy would be an understatement. It had been a remarkable day.





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NEW ZEALAND'S IVORY

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

What is the ultimate pig hunting trophy, a heavy boar or good hooks?

Both would be nice! But scrappy pigs with great ivories from big native forest country are high on the list for me.

As with so many successful pig hunting stories, this one started with a call from the farm manager saying that he'd been seeing sign of a good pig during the week. Justin called me saying he'd seen a decent mark (print) coming to a dead sheep so we knew we at least had a starting point in the native forest along the boundary.

With a nice early start on a still, frosty day, we first wandered out an easy leading ridge that ran in to the heart of scrubby, swampy country. It's usually an area of high probability but today we wandered quite a way with very little interest from the dogs. Lucas and I had taken only the young pup Ace to have some experience running with different dogs, but Justin's two main dogs were experienced.

Wild limestone 'Karst' country. It's very difficult to describe to people who haven't experienced it. Photos can't do justice to the towering and jumbled rock spires and caves when they're clothed in the thick virgin native



Modern pig hunting - lots of time spent looking at Garmin screens!



The pigs make good use of the dry overhangs



Just one of the hundreds of caves we've discovered. We've caught pigs in several



Kiekie - or 'gigi' as I've always (incorrectly) known it. This is a single plant, it often forms large tangled nests

You can't help but feel the clock running away from you in the mornings - the day is warming up, the sun beating down. You just know any scent is getting older and animals more settled so your chances of finding them drop by the minute - or that's how it feels to me! I start walking faster and feel an urgency to cover more ground.

We decided to head back out to the grass edge and work our way back toward the front country, seeing if they picked up any scent crossing back. With the sun warming our backs on such a beautiful morning we lapsed in to a bit of chatter and banter, enjoying the birdsong, and before long Justin's two dogs Brock and Spy had headed off unnoticed.

Brock was getting on, he must have been near ten years old, and with a very successful and active career behind him he was fast approaching retirement age - but clearly no one told him that! Spy is the sister to our Mist. They have a smidge

of bull terrier in them, which our Mist threw heavily toward. Spy however was a fantastic blend, all the finding and drive of the rest of her parentage but a never-say-die attitude for pulling up pigs.

A quick check of the GPS showed they were tracking steadily up toward a kiekie ridge.

It was getting on in the morning so this was promising. Pigs tend to camp up in the jungle of low vine-line trunks. Whether they're there because they like the cover and feed, or it happens to grow in sunny spots on a slope from where boars can easily make a break, I've never figured out.

Now for a quick side note. Kiekie is what every other illiterate pig hunter I've ever met around here (myself included until very recently) calls 'gigi' - Freycinetia banksii. I'm pretty sure 'gigi' is a bastardisation/mistranslation of kiekie that's just been passed on around here. I did have to laugh at how apt the New



Justin checking out a wallow with Spy (L) and Brock (R)

Zealand Plant Conservation Network description is - 'Often coastal in karst country where it may form huge tangles that make access extremely difficult' - can confirm!

Anyway, back to the dogs. Before long we knew they weren't just out looking, so we started on their trail. **Not more than 100 metres in we heard one 'yip' from Spy.** Boots and Ace, both less than a year old, heard it too but it didn't give them enough direction to go. Looking back at the Garmin it showed the dogs



Justin and Lucas having a chuckle after we gave up trying to get the dogs to pose

moving quickly back down the face – **they'd obviously hit a pig and it had quickly broken, taking the path of least resistance to try put distance between itself and the dogs on its home turf.**

We stood stock-still, heads tilted as we strained to listen for any information. We were rewarded with another high pitched yip from Spy that sounded like she was on the move, followed by a handful more, and then a proper bail, immediately joined by Brock's hoarser, steadier bail.

With both older dogs bailing steadily we knew it was a good pig. The pups

went from frozen, with ears cocked and eyes riveted on the distance, to flashes of colour in the undergrowth. We did our best to follow at speed but supplejack, kiekie, and inconvenient shin-high outcrops of limestone slow humans down a bit more.

We heard the exact moment the pups got there. They can wreck a lot of nice steady bails - full of youthful enthusiasm they charge in all guns blazing on what was a nice contained situation. There was a ruckus, some yelps, some crashing ... and thankfully the bail resumed, but twice as loud and three times as frantic as the young dogs let their excitement show.

When we got in to the gully there was a squeal, which caused us all to grimace a bit. **But it was pretty hoarse and clearly not a really little pig as they'd been bailing up until now.** Only metres out they grabbed it again. Justin looked back over his shoulder eyes wide with surprise, gun in hand, and mouthed

'jaw'. Meaning it had a good set of hooks. While exciting, it meant there was no time for faffing about. The tight supplejack had restricted the pig and the dogs had grabbed it. But it restricted us too so we pulled, ducked and wriggled toward the back end before one of the pups could learn about the sharp end the hard way.

Justin grabbed the back legs and flipped it while Lucas dispatched it. I checked all of the dogs over and, thankfully, didn't find a mark on any of them. All of a sudden we could relax and there were whoops and handshakes as we cleaned the mud off his fighting gear and got an appreciation for a very nice jaw.

We had a bit of a breather, sitting in the damp supplejack gully with the hot dogs and humans both puffing hard, combining to make a fog of steam that settled in the branches above. Gutting the boar and getting ready for the carry out we found, as expected, his bladder was chock full - accounting for the relatively short break from a clearly mature boar.

He would've shaken plenty of dogs in his time.

I cleverly volunteered for first carry so that I could do the relatively flat, if supplejack infested, part and hand it over to Lucas when I ran out of pud on the hill. In a fortunate turn of events, we were much closer to the bush edge than we would've been in the morning's Plan A area! Justin didn't even have to pitch in for a carry.

Once back at the house we weighed him in at 121lb, and a later official scoring put him at 23DS. **A really excellent jaw and the best we'd got for a fair while, probably my second best jaw actually, and both from this food-rich West Coast jungle.**



Lucas doing the uphill work



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New Bugle Opportunities

WRITTEN BY ~ THE FIORDLAND WAPITI FOUNDATION

The Wapiti Foundation has undertaken a review on the Wapiti ballot and party sizes

This is Stage One of a two-stage review from the Foundation. The FWF have had pressure from Wapiti hunters to open up more opportunities for people to hunt Wapiti. The ballot is so oversubscribed that some hunters are losing interest in the ballot due to the limited success they have had in drawing a block. But overall, the amount of people applying is still growing.

Currently, each block allows two parties of hunters and a maximum of six people per block, whatever comes first in the draw, two parties or six hunters. Historically, this worked extremely well, and the blocks would be well used with most having the

maximum of six hunters.

In recent times hunters have become smart and worked out that the odds are far higher if you apply for a block in parties of two. **So, the trend has been to apply for the blocks in lots of two, and most blocks end up with only four hunters in them rather than the maximum six.** Last year there were eighty blocks in total. This gave 160 opportunities for parties of two, 160 for parties of three (although folk don't tend to apply in odd numbers), but only 80 for parties of four and six.

Remember that each block only allows either two parties or six hunters, whatever come first in the draw.

The first review for the ballot is based around maximising the amount of people who can hunt the Wapiti during the 40 day rut period.

We looked at the number of hunters who were hunting the rut and quickly realised that the blocks were full, with large amounts of parties of two or four hunters.

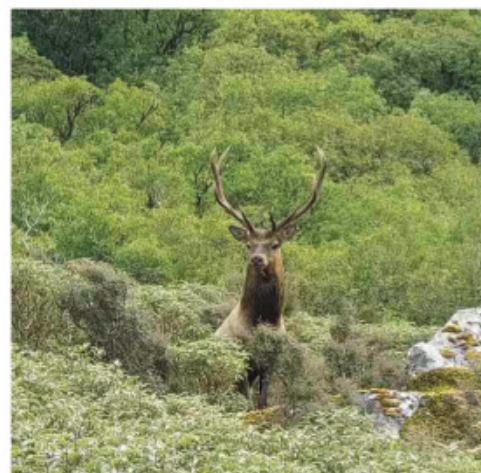
This is something that we were aware of but due to many things, including overharvest of young bulls, we had been reluctant to change. More hunters might just equal more young bulls being shot.

Take 2022 for example. During the rut there is maximum space for 480 hunters, however due to the ballot system explained above, only 310 hunters were permitted to hunt Wapiti during the ballot. This was due to the party of two trend. Great if you were one of the parties of two, but not a fair system for most Wapiti hunters.

THIS IS HOW THE 2023 WAPITI BALLOT WILL BE RUN

One of the limiting factors for change has been our IT, and rebuilding this infrastructure costs money. However, we have committed to the process of redesigning our online ballot system for how the ballot will be drawn.

When a ballot is drawn in the new system each block will have a maximum of six hunters in each block. If a party of two is drawn the next will be selected from the pool of parties of four. If a party of six is



drawn the block is full. There are two other changes to the ballot. **One is that hunters can only apply in parties of two, four or six, as already seems to be the case.** So, the odds are the same for all size groups.

The other change is we will have four full hunting periods. The fourth period was trialled with the five central blocks in the last

two years and was hugely successful, so in the 2023 season we will have four periods for every block and a total of 100 hunting blocks available. That's spaces for 600 hunters and the changes we have made to the 2023 ballot allowing six hunters

per block will ensure that happens. The odds for any given party size drawing a block are the same. 100 x 2, 100 x 4, 100 x 6. But doing the maths, parties of two will still have a slightly greater chance of getting a block. So, let's summarise.

- » **2023 ballot will have four hunting periods**
- » **100 blocks available**
- » **Each block will have 6 hunters per block**
- » **600 individual spaces available for hunters**

We understand that the new system isn't perfect and not everybody will like the changes, however it will almost double the opportunities for hunters to sample

Some of the photo sent through via the Wapiti App

the Wapiti experience. That's a great thing. 310 people hunted the 2022 bugle, if we used the new system there would have been 480 hunters in there.

The new system will pro-rata each block to maximise 6 hunters per block. Common sense tell us that some parties will be drawn and will not fit into a spot due to party size. **So, if a party of two is drawn then another party of two is drawn the second will miss out. But that's no different than any other year.**

Hunters need to focus on the positive and that's the big increase in opportunities to experience the Wapiti bugle.

Next year the FWF will be reviewing block sizes and block boundaries. One line of thought is that instead of having two

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parties per block (which does create conflict) we may split some blocks in two, as well as review smaller blocks.

With change comes responsibility. We all understand that to have a Wapiti herd for our children to hunt we must preserve the herd and that all comes down to hunters making better decision around bull harvest. The Foundation is continually tweaking and finding better ways to manage and understand the herd.

Since Covid the interaction between hunters and the FWF has been limited and our education programmes greatly reduced which has led to some of the worst years for young bulls getting shot.

So, with these new hunting opportunities comes responsibilities. The Wapiti Foundation role in this will be education, resources, and tools for hunters to make better-informed decisions, and you as a hunter will be to take up our education opportunities, learn and advocate on behalf of us all.

The Wapiti monster continues to grow, and the Wapiti Foundation have more projects than ever before. Costs are increasing so we need to get smarter in our future management. **Happily, we have just re-signed our second Community Agreement, and this is a huge endorsement from the Department of Conservation.**

There have been some changes within the Wapiti Committee and hunters are lucky to have a new President, a couple of changes on the committee, and a team of people who have a vast knowledge on what it takes to make this program successful.

One thing the Wapiti have over most other deer in New Zealand is where they live - hunting Wapiti in Fiordland is a package deal. So, hunting Wapiti is about the adventure and if you are fortunate enough to shoot a trophy it's then a trophy of a lifetime. **The Wapiti area of Fiordland isn't a place where you come to collect bone.**

The positive thing from the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation team is that we really think hunters want to do the right thing and most will, they just need to know what that is.

The Wapiti ballot will be out at the start of October.

The Team will be at the Sika Show in October so if you have any questions on anything Wapiti this is your opportunity. The Wapiti Foundation has dragged some of the most experienced Wapiti hunters out of the cupboard and will dust them off and chuck them on a plane to Hamilton just for you. There's going to be 150 plus years of Wapiti hunting experience there to answer your questions.

See you at the Sika Show.

**GOOD LUCK
THE WAPITI TEAM.**



Editor's note - Straight off the bat the new committee has made one of the most important decisions in the history of the Wapiti Foundation. They are in the process of employing a General Manager, which is a positive thing not only for the Wapiti Program but for hunting in New Zealand.

As hunters we need to face the fact the humans are becoming time poor and if we want to have deer to hunt in New Zealand the only way forward is to pay for it.

We're informed that the initial job for the new GM is to look at all FWF education outlets. Asking questions like, are there better ways to educate hunters around making crucial decisions when it comes to shooting a Wapiti bull?



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A ROARSOME EXPERIENCE

WRITTEN BY ~ FERGUS MORUNGA

It was the beginning of April, the time of year when the Red stags really get fired up, and a clear, cold morning out on the farm

The lush, green grass was now coated in a thin, crisp layer of white frost - you could almost smell it. The sun began to peak over the horizon creating a blush of warm, morning colour over the land. Low, misty fog lay over the valleys like blankets masking what lay beneath them. It was an absolute ripper of a morning for the roar out on the farm and we were ready to get stuck in!

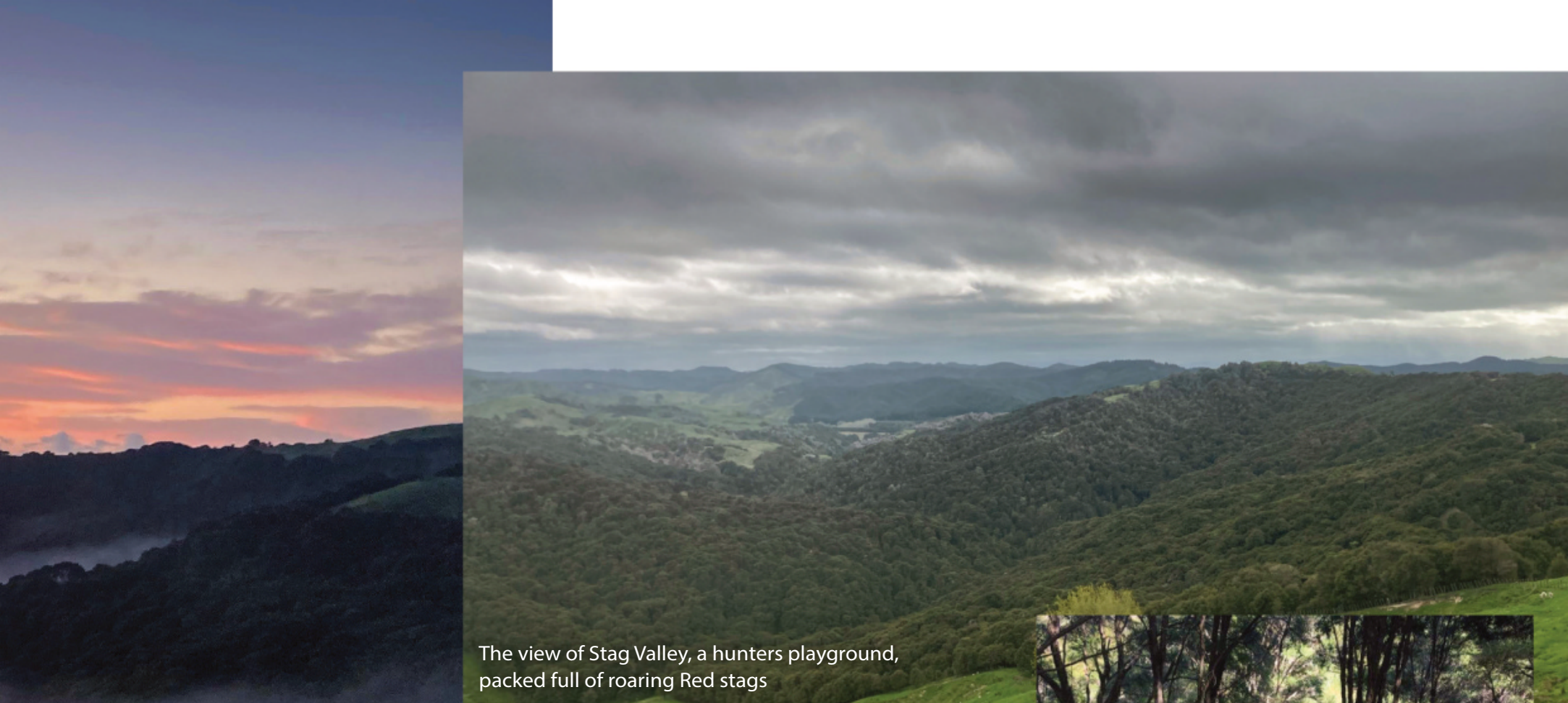
“OOOOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!” A massive, throaty, hearty roar came bellowing out of the valley beneath us. I held my breath listening, my knees began to shake with excitement. Huge smiles erupted on everyone’s faces, with the expectation of an awesome day. I cradled my Tikka T3 lite 7mm-08 in my arms. Bruce had the same gun as me and Dad had his Remington 308 - we were well armed. While we were walking through the farm paddock making our way towards the gateway to the bush, the stags were getting fired up and beginning to roar at each other. **It was getting exciting. Bruce pulled his roaring horn off his shoulder,** stepped onto a peak that overlooked the bush valleys and did our first roar of the day. It floated its way down through the valleys, then there was silence. Dead silence. All we could hear was the sound

of birds chirping in the distance from the kanuka trees. **Then, suddenly, a massive roar erupted close to the bush boundary next to us.** It sounded so deep and loud; I couldn’t have imagined how amazing it would be to be a few metres away from such an aggressive beast roaring like that, and it was incredible. Then four different roars began to sound, all from different sub valleys leading off the main valley below us. It was surprising how many stags were around in such a small place; I couldn’t believe it. We were all just listening and looking down in amazement. There was a lot of “holy shit, did you hear that!” and “that must be a massive one!” We were all extremely excited and ready to get amongst it.

“What’s the plan Brucey?” Dad asked. Bruce is a bloody good hunter and knows

almost everything there is to know about hunting. He has taught me many useful things over the years that have helped a lot on my hunting adventures but we’ll save those yarns for later. *“Well, maybe if we carry on along this track through into the bush paddock and hit one of those main ridges that are along a bit. If we head down those and do a bit of roaring, we should hopefully run into an animal”* explained Bruce. That sounded like a plan. We did just that, roaring our way along the track towards the ridge, and dragging quite a few stags across to us. We entered the foggy, luminous bush. It felt alive. The sounds of cracking branches and powerful birdsong drifted out. It was about to get really exciting.

“OOOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!” A huge, powerful roar bellowed down in the gorge in front of us. **We had crept our way down the ridge right down into a gorge and we were all crouched behind some small mingimingi.** A stag was roaring up the creek ahead of us, one was roaring just above the creek, pretty much in direct line of us somewhere and one was roaring way up above us. None of us had actually seen any stags as yet but we could just hear them bellowing away. The warm, blushing sun was pushing its way through the creek fog, my numb fingers were slowly beginning to warm up, and grasping my cold gun stock wasn’t helping. We sat there, listening, waiting, watching. I was



The view of Stag Valley, a hunters playground, packed full of roaring Red stags



The view from our hut out the back looking down into the bush where all the action takes place during the roar

shaking with excitement and adrenaline. Bruce grabbed his roaring horn again and blew a good, strong roar. We sat, waiting excitedly with anticipation wondering if any of the stags had come closer. "OOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!" Holy shit! That was close. We were sitting on a little ridge and, in a gut somewhere a couple of ridges over, the stag responded aggressively. He was coming in! Bruce turned to me- we all had wide eyes like frightened chickens listening to such a loud and aggressive sound. **"Right Ferg, how do you feel about sneaking around those few ridges and having a go at that stag?"** asked Bruce. I looked across and tried to spot a nice track to creep around on. "OOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!" Shit! There it goes again! Listening to that made me a bit hesitant to creep around towards it. What if it met me on the track? What if it charged me? Nah, shut up Fergus, the likely hood of that happening is very low. Right then, that's the plan, I'm going to have to face the stag.

"OOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!" The roars grew louder and louder the further I crawled along the track towards the aggressive, roaring beast. I looked back at Bruce, Dad and Jack. They egged me on. I pulled my camo buff down over my face and gripped my rifle hard.

I continued my crawl, shaking with excitement, adrenaline, and a little bit of fear. I was almost there; the track was just about to peel off onto a main ridge. The stag must be on the next ridge over. I peeled off onto the ridge keeping as

low as possible and moving as slowly as I could. I could hear Bruce roaring trying to draw the stag towards me. "OOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!" Holy Shit! My heart jumped and did a summersault! It must be so close! By the sounds of things, it was on the next ridge over so the only thing that stood between me and the stag was a little gut. I'd have to cross that gut without making any noise, get across the other side and look for a shot.

"CRACK!" I froze solid, every muscle in my body suddenly locked up. I gripped the handle of my cold, shiny bolt and very slowly pulled it open. I placed my finger inside the action and while slowly pushing the bolt forward to load, I held my finger on top of the bullet so, as the bolt pushed it forward, it wouldn't make a big click when it was inserted into the barrel. I did this perfectly, shut the bolt and slowly clicked the safety catch forward. I was ready now. My heart began to thump like it was trying to break out of my chest and my stomach felt like it had just fell 300 metres - you know that butterflies feeling? Yeah, that, but next level.

I slowly, ever so slowly, turned my head to look behind me. A huge bodied stag stood about 6 metres behind me. His dark, almost black, neck sagged down like an angus bull, his timber was thick and strong stretching above his huge head. Strong, tense muscles were visible through his thick, brown coat. I could hear him breathing, his eyes wide with adrenaline. Stags are very different during the time of roar compared with the rest of year, and it's like they're high on a drug. They can be very unpredictable and highly aggressive. I just sat frozen, I couldn't move even if I tried. I just sat, staring at the massive beast. I couldn't bring my rifle around; I couldn't do



I sat ready, watching the stag through my scope, waiting to fire

anything. The weird thing was he hadn't seen me. He just stood there, right in front of me, with his head high moving it back and forth like a radar, scanning for danger. He could smell something, something abnormal. His timber was thick and long but not even, not worth shooting. That's the hardest decision to make as a hunter, whether to shoot the animal or let it live, especially when you've never shot a Red stag before and you just want to shoot the first stag you see. "OOORRRRAAAHHHH!!!" The stag I was originally chasing let off another hearty roar replying to Bruce, who was still roaring in the distance behind me. The stag standing in front of me tensed every time Bruce roared, his ears perked up and he stood listening. **He must have been standing about 6 metres away from me for about three minutes, just listening, deciding what his next move was.** Finally, after a roar from Bruce, the stag decided to make his move. He broke into a slow walk and began to plod along the track I'd just come off! Man, lucky I still wasn't on that track! I let out a huge sigh of relief, grateful the stag didn't know that a human had been lying a few metres from him. A few cracks

Stag down - I was bloody chuffed!



sounded from behind me as the stag made his way along the track and then he was gone. Bruce, Dad and Jack will get a visitor shortly, what if they try shoot him? This brought a bit of pressure into the game, I had to get within shooting view and range of the stag I was after so if they did by chance have a shot at the one that was making its way around towards them, I'd be able to shoot mine too before it bolts.

I continued crawling down the little

ridge looking for a place to cross over to where the stag was and end up above a big wallow. **Fresh and shiny mud had been painted on a lone, beaten kanuka tree, fresh scars and rips weaved their way up the tree like veins.** This was a great spot for a stag. "CRACK!!!" I froze for the second time and looked back behind the wallow. A massive stag came trotting in aggressively. He was the perfect distance for a shot - this is it, this is the stag. His antler looked thick and impressive. He stood still for a bit,

listening. I slowly pulled my 7mm-08 around and turned the scope power right down as he was close. I jammed the butt into my shoulder, opened the bipod up slowly and searched for the stag in my scope. **There he was, standing there, listening still. I didn't have a good shot, he had to come forward.** "OOOORRRRAAHHH!!!" The stag I was chasing that was just above this wallow let out another loud roar. The stag I was gazing at through my scope froze and perked his ears right up, then he stepped forward chasing the direction of the roar and then amazingly stopped, directly in front of me. It was time. I flicked the safety off carefully and pointed the crosshairs right on the centre of his shoulder, he was perfectly side on. Right before I was about to shoot, he looked right at me. Our eyes met; it was very eerie. "BANG!!!" The sound of the bullet whizzed through air. "WHACK!!!" It was a direct hit, a perfect hit! He dropped; the stag was down! I jumped in the air with excitement and joy. I had done it; I had shot my first Red stag. I made sure he was definitely dead and then slowly approached the dead beast. He was a massive animal! I grabbed his antler. It was so thick and strong. His head wasn't even but it was a great character head. He was a 12 pointer. What a day, my heart was still thumping. **I had finally done it; I had shot my first stag.**



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BAKER CREEK

WRITTEN BY
CAM MCKAY | POINTS SOUTH

TAHR BALLOT BLOCKS

Looking up Baker Creek
Luke Potts

Smack bang in the middle of the Hooker/Landsborough Wilderness Area is the mighty Landsborough River. Midway up-valley Baker Creek joins the Landsborough at about the confluence of Zora creek

Hemmed in by 2500m peaks on either side of the Landsborough, and with a fairly serious river to negotiate, it's a pretty inspiring place.

Seldom travelled outside of the tahr rut but for a few tramping/climbing parties coming from the Hopkins on the East or the Karangarua on the West. Or the occasional hunting party landing on the edge of the Wilderness Area then walking in. With the choice of two landing sites you can choose to set up camp at river level in the Landsborough, or almost 1000m higher up in Baker Creek itself. **A few parties choose to land in the upper, then make their way down to the lower camp over a few days.** A good tactic, but it does involve some interesting

route finding in very steep terrain, and there's certainly been a few people tripped up in doing so. **Later ballot periods or if we have serious early snow like last rut might make the choice of landing site rather easy.**

The lower campsite is nice and sheltered and a good place to weather a storm, being in open bush and just back from the river. From here you have a bunch of creeks and slips visible that you can keep an eye on as the light starts to fade, then climbing early to be in prime position.



A raft is highly recommended as you never know what you'll see across the river

Looking back up the the Landsborough, Baker Creek right
Luke Potts, Richie Williams





Walking down the Landsborough, in low winter flows



The lower campsite

With so much bush and scrub it really is a patience game and a matter of being a bit strategic to make sure those daily climbs up the creeks or up through the bush are

the guys that are fit and strategic that will find those old bulls in this type of country. A good spotter and a bit of experience assessing bulls can mean

Luke Potts glassing across the river downstream from camp Shaun Monk

getting you into the right place at the right time. And with so much cover you never really know what you might stumble into.

Baker is a fairly sought after landing site and will generally have a party in there every week of the ballot that the weather allows. But generally, it's

a lot less wasted time and sweat in climbing to check out bulls only to realize they are in fact too young.

Depending how far you go you may well bump into your downstream neighbours at Dechen Creek or upstream at Opposite Percy, but with the numerous side creeks and slips to hunt there's certainly more than enough room to keep everyone happy.

Save your pennies, as it's a reasonably long flight from either Pleasant Flat or Karangarua. But well worth it, as the scenery is simply mind blowing.



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NOLANS HUT

WRITTEN BY ~ ANDREW BUGLASS | REMOTEHUTS.CO.NZ

In the June/ July edition we paid a visit to Stans Hut in the Whataroa River

I returned in spring to the valley and spent a night at Nolans Hut in the lower Perth River which is the Whataroa's main tributary.

Like Stans, Nolans wasn't built by any government agency but is instead an old musterers hut. As with many of the remote low-use huts in Westland, it is now community maintained, in this case by Kevin Hansen of Whataroa. Kevin's mother was a Nolan and he has been keeping an eye on the place since the Department of Conservation took over hut and track maintenance from the New Zealand Forest Service in the mid-1980's. **When DOC started making noises about removing Nolans in the early 2000's (they considered it to be more or less derelict), Kevin got active.** He's done two big lots of maintenance in the ensuing years during which time DOC has embraced the community partnership model. Retaining Nolans has turned out to be an asset not only for trampers and hunters, and for its historic value, but also for the Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) project which is ambitiously attempting to eradicate possum, stoats, and rats in the area.

Nolans Hut is located at the bottom end of the river flat of the same name around five kilometres up the Perth from its confluence with the Whataroa. The scenery in the area can only be described as magnificent, and the terrain is some

of the roughest in the land. **Nolans Flat was grazed from quite early on by farmers who drove cattle up the river terraces on the true left.** This would have been no mean feat. The cattle are long gone, leaving the valley to a steady trickle of hunters, trampers, and alpinists. The Perth is one of the key access routes to the Garden of Eden and Garden of Allah ice plateaus and Nolans is sometimes used as a stopover on this journey. The hut tends to be overlooked by many hunters for whom the valley heads and their resident Himalayan tahr are more enticing. There are actually fair numbers on the Butler Range right behind the hut although only a few choose to venture on foot up Hughes Creek to get there. **There are reasonable numbers of deer around Nolans Flat and chamois are regularly encountered at river level further up-valley.**

Nolans is a basic four bunker with an open fire and a single paned window. The frame and

floor are totara sawn from the locality and the walls flat iron clad. On the inner cladding there is an inscription by Jim Nolan and Jack Burke who built the place back in 1949. Kevin told me there was already a hut further back on the terrace built around 1920 by Gus Havill who was an original runholder. Ebenezer Teichelmann, the renowned early mountaineer and photographer, visited the place with a group in 1924 on the way to cut a track up the valley to access the Garden of Eden. Jim took over the grazing lease from Gus and shifted the hut down to the river in 1949. **The NZFS took over the maintenance of central Westland's huts and tracks in the 1950's and built Scone Hut further up the valley in the early 1960's.** In 1978 the NZFS replaced a few of Nolans original floorboards, and replaced the bunk sacking with wooden slats, but after that not much was done. In 2004 after DOC had started muttering about removing Nolans, Kevin went in



Nolans around 1982
Peter Livingstone



Mt. Whataroa from Hughes Creek

and re-piled it, and replaced the joists and roofing iron. In 2021 he went in again and rebuilt the chimney and fire surround, put a new door on, painted the roof, and fixed a windowpane.

I'd have to say that I wasn't greatly inspired by Nollans during my early visits in the 1980's. My memory is of a somewhat dark and dingy dwelling with had an active sandfly and rodent population. And besides, I was usually in a hurry to get somewhere more exciting. Kevin's latest effort has transformed, reformed, or maybe just reinstated it to some of its original charm and old-world ambience. Nollans is provisioned with a few pots and pans and has a good axe (thanks Kevin!). It was cosy and comfortable when we visited it in August and the absence of a resident rat population was most noticeable. This can probably be attributed to ZIP whose high-tech monitoring equipment can be seen here and there along the trails.

Nollans is one of many underappreciated huts that could be utilised more. It is not particularly difficult to access, and it would take a reasonably fit party 4-5 hours for to get there from the Whataroa

roadend. The lower Whataroa is a mix of track and river travel to Alf Creek from where a bush track leads to the swingbridge above the Perth confluence. Once on the TR the track climbs steeply past the Butler Junction turnoff onto a bush terrace which is followed for a good hour before dropping to the Perth downstream of Hughes Creek. The track is DOC maintained and is currently in good condition however Big Creek, Alf Creek, and Hughes Creek are all big ones and uncrossable after heavy rain, particularly the latter.

The tops behind Nollans can be accessed via Hughes Creek and Dry Creek. The former has been heavily eroded by successive extreme weather events and requires a scrub bash to get around a gorgy section further up. **Scone Hut is another four or so hours up the main valley.**



Nollans interior



Mauricio at Nollans

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Cervus unicolor unicolor

Male = Stag

Female = Hind

Young = Calf

One of New Zealand's lesser-known deer species, the Sambar deer (*Cervus unicolor unicolor*) exists in two herds, one in the Manawatu/Wanganui region and, the other, Bay of Plenty. Standing up to 1.5m high at the shoulder and weighing up to 270kg, Sambar are New Zealand's second largest deer species, beaten only by the Wapiti.

Initial Liberations

All of New Zealand's Sambar originate from the island of Sri Lanka. The first liberation occurred in 1875 when a hind and stag were released in the Rangitikei district by Falconer Larkworthy, a local runholder. Over the subsequent years, further liberations followed, however overhunting reduced the entire population to less than 30 animals by 1893. It was at this point the species became protected, allowing numbers to recover. Protection lasted until 1930. During 1914-1919, at least 25 Sambar were captured at Himatangi and liberated into the Bay of Plenty region, successfully establishing that population

Sambar-Rusa Hybrids

There are plenty of rumours surrounding the genetic purity of New Zealand's Sambar, particularly in the Bay of Plenty regions. Multiple Sambar stags with deformed or even Rusa-like antlers have been shot over the years, leading to this debate. The most obvious theory is that hybridisation has occurred between the Galatea Rusa population and nearby Sambar populations. Another is that hybridisation occurred prior to liberation in a holding pen overseas, rather than in New Zealand. On the other hand, hybridisation between the two species has never been observed anywhere in the wild, and the area where strange antler configurations have been documented is a considerable distance

away from the Rusa-Sambar overlap, with no evidence of hybridisation found in between. Until DNA studies are carried out, the Sambar-Rusa hybrid will remain a hotly debated mystery.

Hunting Sambar

Being a tropical species, Sambar deer have a very unconventional breeding cycle. Their breeding season extends from May to December, with two peaks around July and November. As a result, most stags will be in hard antler during this time, however it is still possible to see velvet stags at any time of year.

The only vocalisations made by Sambar are their alarm calls, which are very loud and sharp "honks" emitted by both sexes. Stags very rarely "roar" during the rut, and many Sambar hunters will go their entire lives without ever hearing one.

Having evolved alongside tigers in their native range, Sambar have excellent hearing and eyesight, and can be near impossible to stalk in on. Sometimes, instead of fleeing when danger is detected, Sambar may instead lie down like a hiding rabbit, or in some reported cases, enter deep water to hide, with only their noses above the surface.

What is a trophy?

To be entered in the NZDA Record Books, a Sambar stag needs a Douglas Score of at least 200 DS. The current New Zealand record is 280 3/8 DS, taken by R. G. Hill in the Manawatu circa 1924.

Further reading

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EDITORS NOTE

Chamois terminology

Last issue 'we' (me) neglected to update the label for the female chamois from 'NANNY' for female tahr in the previous issue to 'DOE'.

Whilst an oversight it did give us a chance to make a point of the matter. Female chamois are to be called 'does', not an interchangeable term with 'nanny'.

We researched the matter and in T.E Donne's *'The Game Animals Of New Zealand'* from 1924 it conclusively describes them as does in a letter by Captain Ritter von Hohnel of the Austro-Hungarian embassy in 1906 informing T.E Donne of the capture of 'six chamois does and two bucks' was planned. Bruce Banwell also only referred to the females as does, and as an exhaustively thorough researcher I am entirely confident in his conclusions.

So, chamois female = 'doe'.





DRAWN BY ~ FRANCESCO FORMISANO

GAME ANIMALS OF NEW ZEALAND

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Gallery

WINNER



1

Rick Trafford (5) with his first hare. Shot with a Sako Carbonlight in 223



2

Carmen and Drake Hayes with an 8 pointer Carmen shot using a Sako 7mm Rem Mag. Right on daylight as he was making his way back to the bush

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Firearm used must be shown in photo



3

Simon Hillyer - a tasty yearling shot near Hokitika with my Tikka T3X 7mm-08 using Sako Gamehead Pro 150gr ammo at 355 meters

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Mason Marshall from Invercargill pictured with his first deer. Shot using a Tikka T3X Alpine Veil in 270

4



6

Molly Barton shot this Fallow with a Sako 270 at the back of a farm bordering Woodhill Forest



Karin Campbell - my two deer shot at Porangahau using my Tikka T3 in 7mm-08. Built for me by Greg Duley and Norm Lumsden

5



7

Will Laugesen, from Marlborough with a nice hill country billy taken from 150 metres with a Tikka 223



8

Max Dollimore (10) from Marlborough with his first chamois buck, 8". After a lot of thinking of how to get him, Max shot him at 200m and he nearly rolled off a cliff

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HUNTECH

Hunting In The UK

The layers of rolling hills unfolded into the distance, with grass fields, crops, hedgerows and stands of oak trees forming a scattered patchwork of all shades of green - a quintessential idyllic English scene

In the early twilight we were scanning the countryside for Roe deer.

The global restrictions on travel had finally eased and Hannah had joined me on a long-awaited visit to my hometown in Dorset, England. A family wedding was the main impetus for the trip, but of course we'd made ample time to get out hunting.

Andy, a friend of mine from teenage years, had taken a week off work to be our guide. He lived an hour closer to the south coast and had access to three private blocks of farmland, where he was responsible for deer management and pest control. Hunting in the United Kingdom is very different to New Zealand - there are no public hunting areas, so permission from farmers is, as you can imagine, highly sought after. Subsequently, the approach that Andy takes to hunting is an interesting

contrast to many of us Kiwi recreational hunters.

Andy is intentional about the animals he culls and it's something that he takes a lot of pride in. He is on-farm regularly to observe the Roe deer in order to gain a comprehensive understanding about the behaviour, movements and quality of the herd that live in the area.

Not only is gaining permission a lengthy and costly process, the firearms rules are much tighter over there than in New Zealand. You need to apply for a permit for each calibre of rifle you would like to own and use. The firearms officer will then check the land where you intend to use it, and for what purpose. Not quite as simple as taking any rifle you choose into the hills with thousands of hectares of public land to

explore.

This first evening Andy drove us through a block close to his home, a long, narrow piece of ground with a lane running through the middle. It was a great way for us to get the lay of the land. We stopped at several vantage points, scanning fields of spring wheat for irregularities with some ears or antlers peeking through, and glassing into the shadows of hedgerows. It had been a long time since I'd hunted Roe deer, and it brought back memories of hunting as a youngster when my passion for the outdoors had germinated and grown.

Hannah was the first to spot one, a group of three does in fact, despite never having seen Roe deer before. She seems to have an (annoying) knack for picking out animals. The excuse for us boys this time was that we were too



busy yarning and chatting rifles, with Andy having recently purchased a new Sako.

We began to pick up a few more deer as last light approached. It was a reminder to me, and interesting for Hannah to observe, how comfortable the animals were in moving about their respective patches, despite their proximity to busy farming operations. This is a kind of cohabitation we don't usually see in New Zealand, mostly thanks to the significantly lower human population density.

In true English style, the rain arrived before dark and sent us home early. In addition to a handful of does, we'd seen five Roe bucks, two of which met the trophy standard, and three culls. A great Roe buck has six points, with an even three on each antler, and good length and weight. The Roe buck trophy system awards mass and weight as well as symmetry but age, body size and condition are also considerations Andy evaluates, and still being too young,

they were left for another few seasons.

The next morning we returned to the same property, yet didn't pick up any new animals so made our way back for a good English breakfast. We were back in the afternoon with an aim of taking one of the three cull bucks we'd identified. Matt, a hunting pal of Andy's, joined us and we quickly discovered we were on the same wavelength - a shared passion for hunting and the wildlife, the outdoors, and a cracking sense of humour.

We had a few false starts with master guide Andy leading us to particular spots, assuring us with great certainty that we'd find some animals, only to find nothing. I'm sure everyone who has thought they have animal movements in their local spot all figured out can relate!

Eventually we were back in the game. Matt spotted a buck, one that we hadn't seen yet. He was on the move through a long patch of bracken,

which made it tricky to get a reliable look at him. Initially he looked to have straight spikes on his head, but once we managed a better assessment we could see that his antlers were worn back, with thick coronets but no mass to the upper part of the antler. Andy confirmed him as a cull and offered me the chance to take the shot.

Conscious that he might soon move out of sight or decide to bed down behind a shrub, I hastily set up for a prone shot. With a solid position and rest I lined him up and took the shot on the neck. Andy sells most of his carcasses to a local game dealer and had requested specifically to keep as much of the small body of the Roe buck intact. The projectile hit the mark and the buck collapsed amongst the cover. We waited a few moments, just to be sure, then went over to pick him up. When we returned to Andy's place the buck was placed in his repurposed service



Andy and I heading home for an English brekkie



The six-pointer that Andy left for another few years



The buck we'd been following with the camera - he hadn't caught our wind yet



My cull buck, worn antlers and thick coronets but no mass

station drinks fridge awaiting delivery to the game dealer. Good thing the deer are small!

The second piece of land Andy has access to is an old quarry, which is soon to be a nature reserve. Prior to its life as a quarry, the land was a WWII airfield. The plane storage area is a protected site, now shrouded by woodland but evidence of its use remains with bunds, bunkers and concrete structures still visible. We tagged along with Andy and Matt one evening while they did their homework, assessing the numbers of Sika and Roe in the area, observing behaviour, marking probable feeding areas, and discussing ways they might approach the hunting in various wind directions.

The next morning we went walkabout without a rifle, keen to get some good photos of a decent Roe buck for the holiday album. Andy took us to an area on one of his blocks where he knew a buck with trophy potential liked to hang out. Through the just-light and sea fog from the coast we spotted a shape against a hedge row and Hannah and I began our stalk.

We'd only just begun to approach photo-

range with the lens we had when the buck stood up, un-spooked, to begin feeding. What ensued was a bizarre game of cat and mouse, across an open grass field and along another hedge row. We managed to get within 45 metres of the buck, with very little cover, before he caught our wind, gave a couple of barks and bounced off.

The priority of our final hunt with Andy was to introduce his German Wirehaired Pointer, Coby, to hunting, and take a cull buck if the opportunity presented itself. Coby had endured a life of abuse and neglect prior to being adopted by Andy and his fiancé Emily. Through consistent effort and training, and a couple of weeks with an ex-police dog handler, they were now beginning to reap the rewards. Andy had long dreamed of being able to hunt with a dog at his side - the companionship for one, but also the advantage inherent in their powerful noses.

Making our way around the edge of the first field, Coby's pointer instincts showed. He was indicating down the hill. For several minutes we waited and scanned in that direction, waiting for something to move, but saw nothing. We continued

on, onto the other side of the next wheat field, where Coby began winding again. Just as we crested a rise Andy spotted some antlers sticking out of the grass in the next hollow, only 60 metres away. A careful assessment showed it was a small six-pointer with potential - not what we were after but great to see. An encouraging start for Coby!

A bit further on we made the end of a hedgerow, slowly peeking around the corner, and spotted antlers in the wheat field at 58 metres. We all froze. With inching movements I assessed the buck while Andy set up his rifle and shooting sticks. It was a very poor condition buck with a small frame, and small set of antlers. Andy took a clean shot off the sticks. **This first outing with Coby had already been a great success, and this was the icing on the cake.**

A quick gralloch and a carry saw us back at the truck. I would say home for tea and biscuits, but it was time for the pub and a feed!

A big thank you to Andy and Emily - we had a great time. Looking forward to hosting you in New Zealand next year and showing you around some real mountains!



Andy getting set on the sticks, but left this six-pointer with potential



Andy and Coby with his cull buck from our last hunt

Pitcombe Rock Falconry

For a different style of hunting experience altogether we joined my stepfather Alan, who runs a falconry at Pitcombe. It's a charity-run falconry, with most of the feeding and care done by volunteers. We'd visited him a couple of times early on in the trip where we got to know many of the birds he housed, and enjoyed the opportunity to fly owls of all sizes in the paddock out the back. A crowd favourite is a white barn owl called Winston. His side-hustle is weddings - flying the rings down the aisle to the altar, often a surprise for the guests.

This time we were there for some real falconry - an ancient method of hunting using a trained bird of prey to hunt small wild game. Interestingly, the practice of falconry is protected by UNESCO as an intangible element of living human heritage.

Alan had selected one of his Harris Hawks named Lola for the hunt, and after a short walk down the narrow English road with Lola standing on Alan's glove, we popped into an expanse of grass fields. Game on. Our intention was to find some young

spring-born rabbits for Lola to hunt. However, it was her first time out hunting for about 18 months. Due to the threat of avian flu in the UK, owners of birds had been required to keep them in lockdown. **I think we can all appreciate Lola's eagerness to stretch her wings, and also much like us emerging from lockdown,** Alan was conscious her fitness mightn't be quite up to scratch.

We all stood on top of a bank looking down towards an old

train line cutting, eyes peeled for any movement, before continuing out across the fields. Alan, Hannah and I meandered along on foot, while Lola flew from Alan's glove, to a perch in a tree, and back again.

As we approached a thicket we hatched a plan to flush out some rabbits for Lola. Alan circled around the back to beat through the scrub, while Hannah and I waited at the far end, with Lola on my glove, ready to fly into action. However, the only creature Alan flushed out was a fox - which explained the lack of rabbits around!

Moving on, Hannah took the glove and we all continued our countryside adventure. It was a real treat to work with a bird of prey, being up close to observe their behaviour and character, and truly appreciate their flying skills. It was a dream come true for Hannah, and once she was used to this fierce predator landing on her arm, the look of terror turned into big grins. We returned to Alan's home having not managed to spy one rabbit, but we'd covered about five kilometres and Lola was ready for a rest.

Back amongst the aviaries Alan offered us the opportunity to exercise some of

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Hannah, Alan and Lola on the countryside bunny hunt



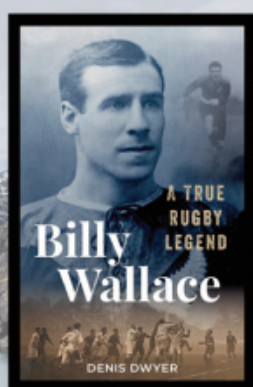
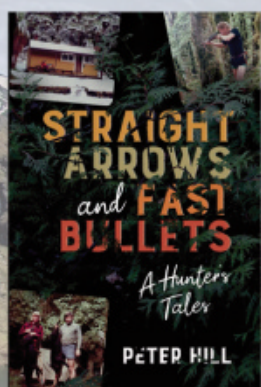
the other birds he had in his care. We flew a couple of falcons, before Alan deemed us "ready". Before we could think about it we were staring straight at Missy, an American Bald Eagle.

Alan placed her on a perch while I stood 20 metres away with my arm outstretched, food in hand. Immediately she spied the food, focus zeroed in, and launched into flight. With a wingspan over two metres she was an ominous sight - heading straight toward me. Landing on my glove, I keenly felt

her six kilograms weighing down my forearm, and the lethal-strength in her feet under the tight grip of her talons through the extra-thick leather glove. I cast her back to her perch. When it was Hannah's turn, she let out her usual nervous-excitement laughs as Missy eyed her up and took flight. We were both in awe and appreciation for what these birds can do. Once Missy had had enough, we retired to the kitchen for tea and biscuits. **Thanks to Alan and the crew at Pitcombe Rock falconry for the unique experiences - it was a highlight of our trip.**



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Their shiny, wet, leathery noses twitching at
the smell of the wind,

A different smell, an unusual smell, the smell
of gunpowder,

A Hunter!

The deer, staring stunned at the new
invaders,

Delicate toothpick legs picking their way over
the valleys,

Tiny hooves crumbling the clay,

Newborn fawns hiding in the scrub,

Safe from civilisation,

The bush quietens down,

The birds start chirping again,

The pinky peach sky rises over the ridge and
the stag guides his hinds over the hills to rest.

WRITTEN BY - IRIS JONES 12 - AGE 12

CHASING DINNER

I rush towards the barks

I slash my way through the thick supplejack

I come to a clearing

I spot the dogs scragging the huge, black,
muddy boar from his muddy ears

The boar sways his big black head from left
to right trying to sink his jaw into the dog's
shoulder

The boar squeals at the top of his lungs

I reach over

Snatch the boar's muddy back legs

And flip the beast over

I whip out my knife from my sheath

And drive it into his chest

It squirms from its reflexes

What a successful hunt!

WRITTEN BY - JACKSON RUMBAL- AGE 12

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DESCENT
CONTROL (ADC)



SEAT BELT
INTERLOCK



HEAVY DUTY
FEATURES



WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE AND GREG DULEY

BUSHNELL ENGAGE EDX 10X42 BINOCULARS

In 2018 Bushnell launched a whole new line and classification system for their hunting optics

The Prime, Nitro and Forge, in order of price – the same as with their riflescopes, rangefinders and spotting scopes. These are complimented by the Engage series which predates the new system and they sit between the Prime and the Nitro.

Within the Engage 10x42 binoculars range the Engage X is the entry level, followed by the Engage DX and finally the Engage EDX.

The Engage EDX incorporates Bushnell's highest quality Flourite ED Prime glass for better colour rendition which also aids contrast and ultimately resolution. The roof prisms are PC-3 phase coated, and they also have a dielectric coating for greater light transmission, which

Bushnell claim at 92%. The EDX is the only model to receive UltraWide Band: an anti-reflection coating process that is customized for every lens element in the optical path. The external lens surfaces have Bushnell's EXO barrier protection - a coating that molecularly bonds to the glass and Bushnell claims it repels water, oil and dust, and is very scratch resistant. **The optics are housed in a rubber-armoured magnesium body with a single wide bridge.**

The lockable diopter adjustment is in the right eyepiece, and the eyecups are of the 3 position twist-up type. Across the range they come with simple rubber objective lens and eyecup protectors, as well as a neoprene neck strap and Cordura pouch.

TESTING

In the optical test, daylight resolution was pretty good. The HD glass gave a reasonable amount of the expected "pop" and a pleasant



The accessories that come with the binoculars

viewing experience. They lost a little more than I was expecting in low light - dropping two levels on the Zeiss test pattern whereas normally I expect only one. They definitely had a little detectable spherical aberration, beginning 2/3rds of the way out from the centre and that affected the flatness of field score a little but did not significantly affect the viewing experience. **Glare was very well controlled, and a low angle sun in your face was not a deal breaker.** Distortion was also well controlled. Len and barrel alignment were good. The field of view is a little less than some more expensive brands for this magnification and objective lens size. The eye relief measured 13mm, a couple of mm's less than I'm used to, and I did find the eyecups quite wide in diameter and the eyepiece lens more recessed than I prefer. Depending on your eye socket bone structure, you may find you



The Engage 10x42's are a nice compact design



I like the low bridge and sleek shape, less things to get caught coming out of the pouch when you're rushing

IN THE FIELD

We had several opportunities to put these binoculars through their paces in the field, most notably during a mid-winter Main Divide trip. This was an ideal test as at this time of year there's nothing to rely on but diligent glassing to give you results, often with patchy snow which can certainly put cheap glass to the test. I was very impressed with them, the weight and shape were

conductive to comfortable glassing, as was the sharp centre and good contrast. The most noticeable drawback was the minor spherical aberration's effect on the flatness of field, it affected your glassing experience and made it feel as though it had a narrower field of view. However, you've got to have a few compromises in a set of binoculars that are only \$939! The resolution, colour, contrast and weight were all much better than I expected, in all these binoculars provide great value for money. I certainly found plenty of animals with them!



have to bring the binos closer to get a full field of view – especially if sitting down cross legged glassing uphill as we often do in the mountains.

RESOLUTION	FLATNESS OF FIELD	TWILIGHT PERFORMANCE	GLARE	FOV M/1000M	WEIGHT	RRP
9	8.5	8.5	9.5	113	660gm/23.5oz	\$939



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SPRINGFIELD ARMOURY

2020 WAYPOINT

WRITTEN BY ~ GREG DULEY

The name Springfield is synonymous with American military rifles and cartridges.

In 1774 during the American Revolution George Washington ordered the creation of the Springfield Armory in Massachusetts, and that entity designed and provided arms and ammunition for the US military until the government closed it down in 1968.

Most will have heard of the 1903 Springfield rifle and cartridge used by the US military in the World Wars, and the 30-06 Springfield sporting version of that military cartridge.

In 1974 the Reece family started a private company in Illinois they called Springfield Armory after the old military manufacturer. **Initially they produced several of the more recent and famous military designs like the M1 Garand and M14 30 caliber semi-auto rifles,** and the 1911-A1 45ACP

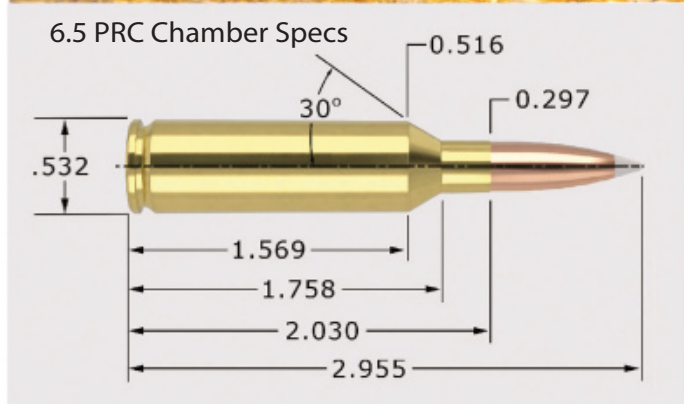
semi-auto pistol. They then went on to produce a range of polymer Glock type pistols and AR15 platform rifles.

In 2020 they released their first bolt action rifle, the 2020 Waypoint, designed as a multi-purpose hunting and field competition rifle. Interestingly Springfield Armoury have kept to the military tradition of including the year of release in their model designations. Chambered in 6mm Creedmoor, 6.5mm Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC and 308 Win, the Waypoint is a fairly conventional improved Remington 700 type short action. The receiver has EDM cut raceways, an integral recoil lug, and

custom style bolt release at the left rear. It has a fluted 2 lug bolt with a cone breech. The sliding extractor claw is set in the right-hand lug, with the spring loaded plunger ejector located at the 4.30 o'clock position - both combining to provide perfectly angled ejection without hitting a low mounted scope. **Twin cams make the cocking effortless. The bolt handle and bolt knob are both removable.** The trigger is the superb Trigger Tech adjustable roller type, our current favourite for custom rifles - easily adjustable and repeatable down to a 1.5 pound let off. AICS style alloy bottom metal and steel magazine with a 2.990"

Chris Crosse giving us a hand with the kwi monitoring





maximum OAL cartridge complete the action metal work.

The barrel on the model we received is a unique carbon fibre stabilised offering from comparatively new barrel maker BSF.

It has a fluted stainless steel light contour barrel inside a carbon fibre tube under compression tension that only touches the steel at the chamber and muzzle ends. BSF claim this increases barrel cooling while offering better stability, minimising your point of impact walking during longer shot strings. With the current ammo and components shortages in NZ, I simply was not able to do enough rapid fire shooting to test this out properly, but some US gun writers who have do agree with BSF's claims. The muzzle is threaded 5/8"x24 and a radial type brake and thread protector are supplied. The carbon fibre tube is a parallel .935" O.D though, so not many off the shelf suppressors will have a large enough isolator tube to fit over that. If carbon is not your thing, the Waypoint is also available in a plain stainless steel BSF barrelled version. AG Composites make the carbon fibre stocks for the Waypoint, and they are of a proper laid up construction - not made by the cheaper and less rigid chopped strand method. The action is bedded on the hard



The Waypoint is a fairly conventional improved Remington 700 type short action

epoxy fill with aluminium pillars. The shape is a cross between a tactical and hunting style, with a very full, high comb butt stock with a vertical grip, and more sporting style forend. Four recessed sling attachments are incorporated (one either side at the front and the rear), and the forend is fitted out with the M-LOK system for bipods and other accessories. A one inch Pachmeyer decelerator recoil pad finishes the hardware. This stock including all its fittings weighed 32 ounces/910gms, so no lightweight but to be expected with such a full shaped and accessorised stock like this. There is also an adjustable comb model but this adds a further 12 ounces/340gms of weight. There are two camo colour options - a black, white and grey version called Ridgeline; and a green, white and grey one called Evergreen. The latter was the option supplied to us, and all its metal work except the black bolt was finished with a green Milspec Cerakote. In the Ridgeline option the metal work is a white Cerakote.

THE 6.5 PRC (PRECISION RIFLE CARTRIDGE)

After the 6.5 Creedmoor, this is one of the current popular 6.5 cartridges.

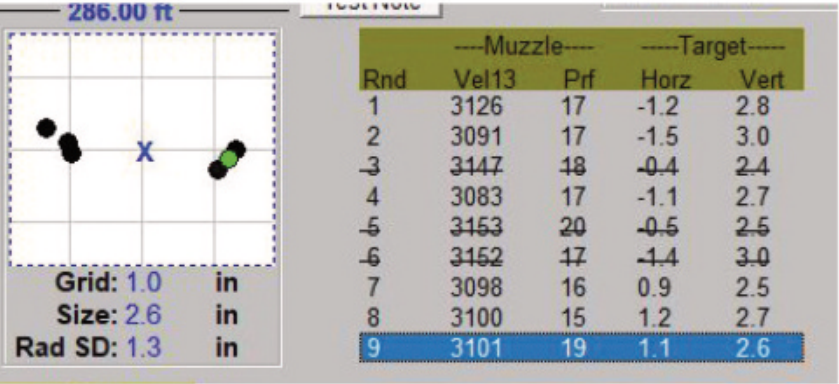
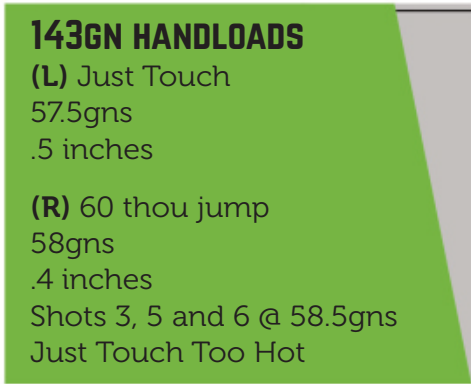
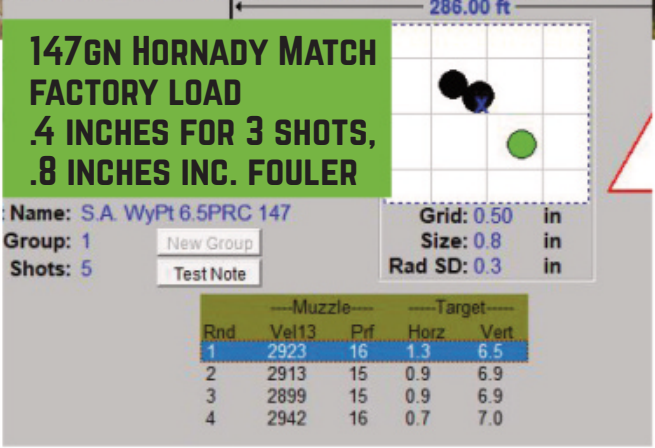
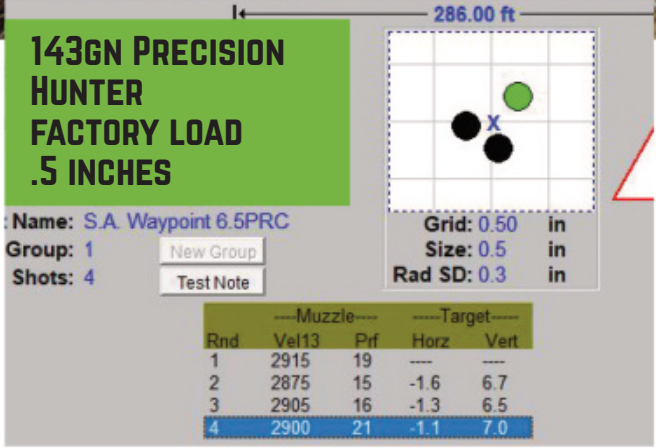
A good way to describe it is Hornady's "6.5 Creedmoor Magnum." Designed initially in 2013 by George Gardner of GA Precision as a PRS (Precision Rifle Shooting) cartridge for competitive field rifle shooting out to 1000 yards, the 6.5 PRC is based on a shortened 375 Ruger case, or the 300 RCM necked down - both of which were Hornady/Ruger collaborations. This case is very

similar to the SAUM case and runs the same 30 degree shoulder, but instead of stepping up to .545" in front of the rim, the PRC remains at the .532" rim diameter - negating the need for a rebated rim and therefore in theory anyway having less potential for feeding issues. **Capacity wise at about 62gns of water, it is slightly less than the wildcat 6.5 SAUM and slightly more than the 6.5/284 Norma, but there's very little in it.** At a similar 2.030" case length to the SAUM, they both fit in a short action better than the 2.170" of the 6.5/284. The SAAMI maximum pressure specs for the 6.5 PRC are 65,000psi, verses 62,000psi for the Creedmoor - which combined with its extra capacity gives it a 250 to 300fps velocity advantage over the Creedmoor. There is not a big selection of factory ammo made for the 6.5 PRC yet, but Hornady make their excellent Precision Hunter and Match ammunition lines in this calibre - loaded with their 143gn ELD-X and 147gn ELD-M respectively.

Next up was mounting the scope. The receiver will take any 6-48 screw Remington style mounts, but came with a factory fitted picatinny rail. NZ Asia, the Springfield distributor, supplied a Leupold 3-15x44 VX-5 HD with Warne Mountain Tech rings. Steve's Wholesale supplied Hornady Precision Hunter and Match ammo, so that was great place to start. Right from the beginning after the initial fouling shot the Waypoint shot great with the 143gn Precision Hunter and the 147gn Match ammo. Interestingly, the 147gn stuff shot slightly faster than the 143gn, even though the factory ballistics say it should have been 50fps slower



The hind on a claypan 340 yds away



– 2960fps verses 2910fps. Next up we worked up a handload with the 143gn ELD-X starting at a Just Touch seating depth. **With 58gns of Reloder 26 and a magnum primer, 3100fps was safely achievable** – 58.5gns for 3150fps was too much of a good thing though, with the groups opening up. Even at 3100fps the accuracy wasn’t quite as good as the factory Precision Hunter load though, and at that seating depth they didn’t fit in the magazine, so I pushed them back to a 60 thou jump – 10 thou

longer than the factory 70 thou jump - and they promptly shot a very good .4” group. Coincidentally, this around 65 thou jump has been a depth that seems to suit the ELD-Xs in a number of calibres, so don’t be afraid to try a reasonable jump with them in any rifle or calibre.

The 2020 Waypoint has a .75 MOA 3 shot average accuracy guarantee, so it easily made that with everything I tried in it.

Considering the relatively moderate case

size and very moderate recoil, 3100fps with a .571 G1/.292 G7 BC 143gn bullet is very good performance. **I can see why George Gardiner settled on this bullet diameter and capacity for PRS matches where first shot hits at long range count for so much, but due to the high volume of rounds required you still need good barrel life.** The 6.5 PRC seems ideal for this application, but also makes for a very capable hunting cartridge – much more so than the 6.5 Creedmoor in my opinion.

	POWDER/GRAINS	MUZZLE VELOCITY	SEATING DEPTH	GROUP SIZE	COMMENTS
143GN PRECISION HUNTER	-	2900fps	70 thou jump	.5 inches	Most accurate factory load
147GN MATCH	-	2919fps	70 thou jump	.8 inches	
143GN ELD-X	Reloder 26/57.5gns	3100fps	Just touch	.7 inches	Likes more jump?
143GN ELD-X	Reloder 26/58gns	3100fps	60 thou jump	.4 inches	Superb hunting load

CALIBRE	6.5 PRC
RECEIVER	Cerakoted stainless steel
BOLT	4140 tool steel fluted + nitrided
BARREL	24", 1:8 twist, carbon fibre sleeve
MUZZLE THREAD	5/8"x24
STOCK	Carbon fibre
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	3 rounds
TRIGGER	Trigger Tech
LENGTH	45.5"/115.5cm
BARE RIFLE WEIGHT Inc. magazine & scope base	7.25 pounds/3.3 kgs
RRP	\$4,999

HUNTING

We'd just had a pretty good snow storm in the Hawkes Bay high country while I was doing the load work so we had to wait a few days until it melted a little to be able to get into the Kawekas. With the nesting season for the kiwis being well advanced, we had a bunch of birds to monitor and collect data from. This data gives the dates for the nest raids when the nest burrows have to be found and the newly hatched chicks are brought out to the kiwi crèche. Here they are raised until they are deemed big enough (900g to 1kg, roughly 6 months old) to be "stoat proof" at which point they are released back into the Kawekas. I was hoping in our travels I

till almost dark before I was able to sneak away leaving Fi and Chris to try and get the last bird's data for the day. While only having about 5 minutes of glassing light and no time for a proper hunt, I did see a little bit of sign on the claypans as the snow melted giving me hope for the next morning. It was fine and overcast at dawn, but there was rain forecast about midday so I wasted no time heading for an area that usually produces this time of year. I was travelling at a good clip along an old snow damaged track in the Manuka for my planned destination when I decided to detour briefly. I thought I'd have a quick look at some claypans around a high knob we often see deer crossing, on their return from night time feeding. The detour was well worth the effort, as a quick scan with the binos revealed

could disappear from our volunteer work long enough to get a nice eating Sika hind with the Waypoint.

Every cloud has a silver lining and a recently retired Chris Crosse, having closed down his Kaweka based helicopter business after he'd had a gutsful of bureaucracy and red tape, was now available to help Fi and I with the kiwi work. The first day of our trip some of the birds data signals were hard to get and it took us

a hind still in the open 340 yards away, not having yet dropped down into the thicker scrub. A hasty set-up had the rifle loaded and dialled up ready to go and a quartering away shot behind the shoulder through the chest cavity dumped her on the spot. **The 143gn ELD-X expanded beautifully and exited through the off side shoulder.** While not the ideal bullet up close at a fast magnum's high impact velocities (they can over-expand and fail to penetrate deeply enough), I think the ELD-X's construction is ideally suited for this calibre and application.

Having made a success with their foray into bolt action rifles, what will we see next out of Springfield Armory? I'm picking it won't be long before they produce a longer actioned and barrelled version of the 2020 Waypoint as that would be ideally suited to the larger and faster 7mm and 30 cal magnums. This style and weight of rifle platform would make a good longer range hunting rifle in the likes of the 7mm Rem mag, 300 Win mag, 28 and 30 Nosler, and the RUMs etc. While not everyone's cup of tea, if you're after a rifle capable of cross over PRS and hunting applications - and with a bunch of features usually only found on more expensive custom rifles - **check out the 2020 Waypoint at your local firearms store.**



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IMPROVEMENT OF HUNTER ACCESS REQUIRED

You talk to hunters or other outdoor recreationists around New Zealand and you will often be confronted with a common theme – public access to public conservation land is decreasing. It is a real concern and not only has implications for our recreational and food gathering opportunities, but also inevitably impacts game animal management because at the end of the day if hunters can't get into an area to hunt it, they cannot help keep the populations in check.

Over the last few months, the GAC has submitted a number of submissions on a range of issues. A key theme central to all of these from our perspective has been the importance of preserving, and where possible, enhancing public access to the Conservation Estate.

We are well aware of the access issues that the closure of the Waipakihi and Rangipo Intake Roads have had for hunters wanting to hunt the southern Kaimanawas. We are working with other hunting sector bodies and the landowner to understand the future possibilities to use these roads, as they are private accessways on private land. Unfortunately, the landowner was having to put up with fly tipping and other nefarious activities, which prompted them to close the roads to the public.

In some good news, we were pleased to see the New Zealand Walking Access Commission recently rebranded as Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa Outdoor Access Commission. This is something we advocated for during the Commission's review in 2019 so that it can better reflect its more holistic role in protecting all types of access important to the public, including for hunters with firearms, dogs and vehicles.

We would also like to see the Commission provided with the power to make decisions on unformed legal roads and issues of public access. Currently it's legislation only allows it to mediate.

There are many situations where access could be negotiated with the landowner, particularly where unformed legal roads exist. In such cases it seems reasonable for the Commission to hold and exercise that power.

HOPE FOR REFORM TO FIREARMS LICENCE PROCESSING

News that Police Minister Chris Hipkins is considering legislative reform to tackle the issues around firearms licence renewal delays and the subsequent backlog in applications will be music to the ears of hunters.

As the statutory body representing the interests of the hunting sector, the GAC has received a lot of feedback from firearms licence holders experiencing frustration with the renewal process. We managed to successfully advocate for extensions to licence

expiry dates for those that applied for renewal and were waiting due to COVID-19 and changes to the Arms Act over the last couple of years but the backlog remains.

Data released by the ACT Party indicates that more than 3000 firearms owners have been waiting more than six months for their licence renewals to be processed with more than 800 still waiting after 12 months.

It now seems as though a permanent solution may be on the cards.

"The current settings, with processing times as they are, may be putting lawful firearms owners in a position where they are holding firearms unlawfully. I am looking at what can be done to fix that," Minister Hipkins said in a statement. *"I have taken advice and am considering what changes could or should be made to the Arms Act, and plan to take options to Cabinet this month."*

The GAC will wait and see what this legislative change will look like but in the meantime, we will continue to represent hunters on the Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) as well as the Range Certification Engagement Group and work to provide advice to Police on issues related to firearms use in hunting.

ENGAGE WITH THE GAC

The GAC will be joining the rest of the hunting sector at the upcoming Sika Show and we look forward to engaging with hunters from all over the country.

It is really important for us to meet kiwi hunters and discuss the issues that are affecting them and their hunting. Not only can we then make a better job of advocating for their interests but it's also useful to learn about what is happening out amongst our hunting communities.

We have a small team and very limited resources, which can at times limit our ability to engage with all the various parts of our sector and we certainly have a long way to go when it comes to iwi engagement. However, we continue to do our best and really value the relationships we have with all the various clubs, foundations, sector leaders and influencers. There are some really great people involved in hunting and game animal management in New Zealand and we want to help support what they are doing.

So, if you are planning on attending the Sika Show, please come and find me and our Councillors at the Game Animal Council stand and have a chat about what we are doing in the hunting and game animal management spaces.

The Sika Show is to be held at Mystery Creek on 29-30 October. Tickets are still available at www.sikashow.co.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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BIG WATER GIANTS

— WRITTEN BY ~ CALLUM MCKENZIE





Conor putting the v-boards to good use

Giant Canada geese over big water must surely be up there as the pinnacle of waterfowl hunting in New Zealand, if not in the world

If it isn't, it would have to be one of the most satisfying ways to hunt them. Satisfying certainly doesn't mean easy and if you're happy to be getting out of bed at stupid o'clock to do a hand full of boat trips in the dark, carting a mountain of decoys with a bunch of good keen mates, then this might be a bit of you.

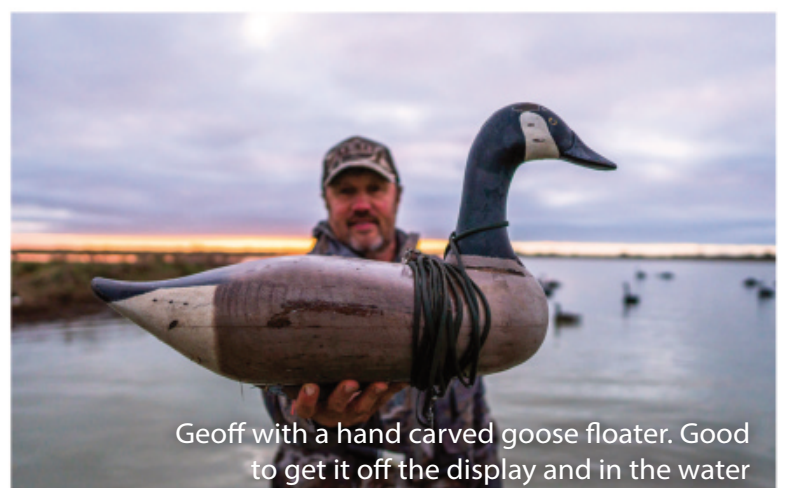
Keep in mind that you are hunting birds that can be extremely cagey and have been given a good hurry up from the local sky-busting society all through duck season, with a huge body of water allowing them to land wherever they want. When you are trying to organise a good catchup with mates it's a heck of a lot easier to pick a date and stick with it - we don't quite have the luxury of saying "*good wind this weekend fellas, let's get into it*" as it's likely most of us won't be able to make it on such short notice. The biggest compromise of having a fixed date is that we don't get to plan around the weather. Ideally, we would plan the hunt around a good wind, as we all know how crucial wind can be for waterfowling.

The dates were locked in, and we were a party of eight guys - Conor, Geoff, Hunter, Brett (Spud), Isaac, George, James, Patrick and I. The next box to tick off was scouting. **Scouting is always a priority**, and I wasn't

surprised to see who first put their hand up for this job. Hunter took a day off work on the Friday leading up to the hunt and his old man Spud bought their boat up so they could have a good nosey at a couple of likely looking spots on the lake. **Some of us had a rough idea where to find a goose or two from observing them during the duck season** - we seem to do more watching than shooting sometimes. After a few phone calls and Snapchats back and forward throughout the day, the excitement was really starting to build. I knew there were few geese in the area that Hunter and Spud were looking at but the actual number of geese in the area was much higher than first thought. There looked to be close to 2000 birds. As there were so many birds using and trafficking

through our chosen spot, we decided that our decoy spread was going to have to be of a substantial size, as a cheeky couple dozen wasn't going to do the trick. **Between eight or nine mates you can put together quite a few decoys.** We figured our decoys would stand out a lot more if we had the bulk of the spread out on the water, so decided to get our hands on as many floaters as possible. We ended up with a real mixed bag - around 120 floaters and V-boards were pulled together, a couple dozen shells and the same number in silhouettes. A few handfuls of full body decoys turned up a bit later in the day, just to mix it up a little.

Having a mountain of decoys to put out and four A-frame blinds to grass up meant we had to make an early start.



Geoff with a hand carved goose floater. Good to get it off the display and in the water



George and Spud getting stuck in



Hunter doing what he does best

We met at the boat ramp around 4:30am and were into it straight away. Eventually, with all three boats in the water and one after the other, we were on our way to the chosen spot. **There is something a bit freaky about heading out into a big black nothing when you are flying across the lake in the pitch black,** even if you do have good lights and the trip isn't that long. By the time my boat made its way out of the river mouth, James and George had already pulled up, had their headlamps on and were unloading their gear, giving us a beacon to aim for. Conor and I pulled up with Hunter, Spud, Geoff and Isaac not far behind us. Three boats ashore and there was a bit of a spring in everyone's step, but we had plenty of work to get through. It was already 5:30am and we wanted to be sitting down, coffee in hand, loaded up and ready to go by 7am. The blinds were grassed in good time, and we all chipped away at putting the decoys out. While we were standing out in front of the blinds making sure everyone was happy with our efforts, we did get caught out. Two Canadas came flying straight out of the heavens, hardly making a sound. They were locked right up and wanted to land straight in the spread. We all stood there in shock, looked at each other, had a bit of a giggle and joked about them being the only two birds that would decoy all day. **We took that moment as a sign to go and hide the boats well out of sight and away from potential flight lines** (very hard to do on a massive lake), finish the decoys and get our gear sorted for the day ahead.

It didn't take long before different mobs of birds were gaining our interest, but on a big lake they could be going anywhere, and you tend to quickly find out if they are interested or not. If you don't try you won't know, so it doesn't hurt to give them a good call and a bit of flagging and see how they react. Eventually, we were calling at birds that were on good flight lines, and a tidy mob of four sailed on into the spread. The guns came up

and the fellas put all four on the deck. We were absolutely stoked. All the hard work and planning had come together, and the result was exactly what we were after. Throughout the morning we picked up a dozen or so Canadas, but nothing else decoyed quite the way we wanted. The geese were as we expected them to be on public water. They were wary, very call shy at times and we often wondered if we were hunting the same birds we had seen the previous day. We pulled out just about every trick we had to try and get the geese to decoy and came away happy with our morning's efforts. All credit to the guys as they pulled off some tidy shots on some not-so-easy birds. We were pushing sh!t up hill with the lack of wind, as it wasn't giving the birds any direction and was allowing them to get right over the top of us, so it was decided that we needed to have a decoy shift. **Uber eats turned up around mid-day in the form of Pat, who had pulled a sneaky drive-by to see the Colonel about his herbs and spices, then delivered us two buckets of his finest secret recipe along with another couple dozen full bodies. While the full bodies were added to the** spread, the floaters were broken up and spread out into smaller groups instead of the two or three big groups we originally had. After this was done, we had a spread that looked far more natural and relaxed. Hopefully we were then set up for the wind that was supposed to turn up at some point in the afternoon.

A good hour or two went by with very little flying so we took the chance to have a feed and relax a bit. Spud took the term relax to the next level and nodded off for a while. As the afternoon ticked on, it wasn't long before we felt that expected breeze come over our shoulders. A few eyebrows were raised and we were all starting to get excited again. As the wind picked up, the hunting definitely did too. It's hard to know if it was the wind or just the time of day, but the geese were starting to

get restless and we weren't left waiting too long before we had flights directed at us. The wind was nothing to write home about, but it was well and truly enough to give the geese direction, making the shooting a heck of a lot more consistent. **We had a two-hour period where it seemed to be nonstop - there was flight after flight moving in our vicinity and a lot of the time they were reacting well to our calling.** It was definitely golden hour and moments like that are impossible to forget. The light was amazing as the sun set, geese were all over the show and the icing on the cake was managing to fool a few into the decoys. When the hunting out on the big water gets a bit hectic, having a dog or two is almost a must unless you are wanting a good leg workout. Pat had his young Chesapeake Bay retriever, Oak, who was still learning the ropes but made a couple of nice retrieves and Geoff had his Labrador, Jess. Jess has a few years under her belt and made life a heck of a lot easier for us with some really good retrieves. As the sun set behind the mountains, it was time to call it a day. Confident that the weather report was right about the lack of wind, we left the decoys out so we could have another crack in the morning. We jumped in the



boats and made good use of what daylight we had left to get back to the trucks.

Leaving the decoys and blinds out overnight meant we were allowed a bit of a sleep-in and a couple of the fellas nearly took it a bit far, but we managed to get to the boat ramp in good time. **There was not a breath of wind and none in the forecast for the day.** The lake was like a mirror, great for boating, not so great for hunting. Nevertheless, we were still keen to get back out there and see what we could make of the morning. It was as predicted, with the lack of wind making it very hard to keep the geese out in front and yesterdays shots most likely made the geese even more cagey. As in the previous morning, we had a few really nice decoying birds but the most of the time it was about taking the opportunity when it's there. Calling the shot can be a damn hard decision to make and when the birds aren't decoying the way we want them too it makes it even harder. **I love getting waterfowl to decoy, feet down, fully committed, pretty much bums on the water and if they're not doing that I really struggle about when to call the shot** (probably why I love sticking to the camera). The hunting slowed down as we drew closer to mid-day so we called it a day to gives ourselves plenty of time to pack up. You can't compare a big water hunt like this to some of the field hunts we have had in the past. It's on a whole different level and its open to anyone willing to put in a bit of hard work. It can be tough and it

will frustrate you but the rewards are 100% worth it. There is never a dull moment out in these places, whether you're calling at geese or ducks, experiencing another unreal sunrise or watching native wildlife go about their business. That's what hunting public water is all about. I think if you don't see the beauty or lose the enjoyment of all the small things other than pulling the trigger you are missing out and potentially missing the point of it all. **Yes, the end result is putting meat on the table but there is so much more that we can gain from hunting.**



The mad dash when we can see a flight of geese heading our way



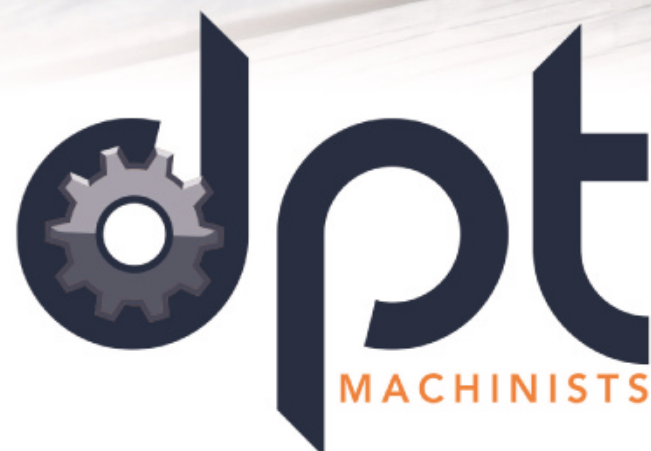
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Photo Gallery

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

Grand Winner

Oliver Winslade's (12) first stag. After some back and forth roaring he put in a good stalk. A hind appeared before the big boy, but Oliver showed good restraint and was rewarded with this 10 point bush stag



Aaron Cox's first public land stag here in NZ. He's been on so many trips and walked away with nothing but hard work paid off!



Caelan Ward (7) with his first kill for the table while on a meat run with his Dad and poppa in Ongarue



Dylan Bell (12). I shot my first bull tahr in Fairlie. It was 13 inch and 9 years old, stacked with age rings



Beau Saunders (8) with his first Fallow buck. Making Dad and generations of hunting Grandad's proud





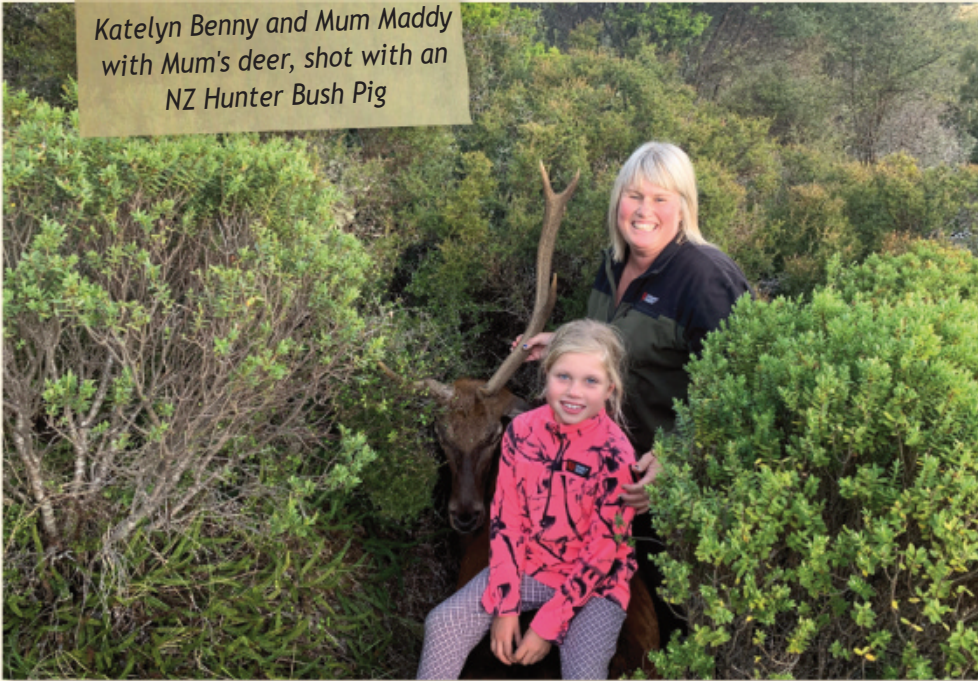
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NEW ZEALAND

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

Grand Winner
Braidyn Christison carrying out a small 12 pointer, doing the hard yards

Katelyn Benny and Mum Maddy with Mum's deer, shot with an NZ Hunter Bush Pig



Our daughter in law Jordy gained an interest in hunting. She worked hard over several years to develop the needed skills to accomplish the taking of her first deer



Charlie Nelson (4) absolutely loving opening day in Hawkes Bay



Jimmy Schick (7) on the West Coast with a boar he carried out by himself



Millie Galloway (14) shot her first Red stag using Dad's 300 WSM. Taken near Gisborne



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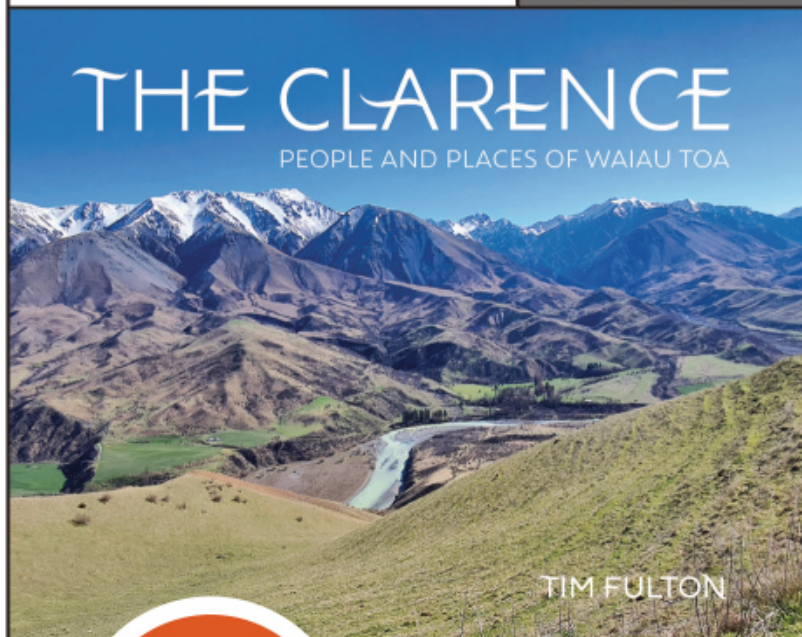
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Rural journalist Tim Fulton explores more than 200 kilometres of mountains, rivers and valleys

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WRITTEN BY ~ RICHARD HINGSTON

VENISON CARPACCIO

How about a recipe that doesn't involve cooking? Well, to be fair it does require very little and some prep and equipment

I thought this may have your attention! All that is required is a sharp knife, a freezer, a chopping board, and a pot and that's basically it for this recipe. It's a great option for this time of the year as the weather gets warmer.

What exactly is carpaccio (kar-pach-e-o)? It's a traditional Italian dish comprising of very thinly sliced, raw meat or fish, served as a starter or appetiser, although in more recent times it has evolved to as a method for fruit and vegetables as well. The dish is generally served with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, a vinegar or lemon juice and a seasoning of salt or the like.

Many cultures use raw meat in their classic dishes - carpaccio is totally different to steak tartare, which is made from meat that has been finely minced or chopped. In Japanese cuisine sashimi (raw meat or fish) is generally sliced a little thicker than that

in carpaccio. Tataki is another dish that is generally served raw or sealed on the outside and is cut in a similar thickness to sashimi.

The dish was invented in 1963 by Giuseppe Cipriani from Harry's Bar in Venice, Italy. He originally prepared the dish for Countess Amalia Nani Mocenigo when he learnt that her doctor had recommended that she only eat raw red meat. The dish was named carpaccio was named after Vittore Carpaccio, a Venetian painter known for the characteristic red and

white tones of his work and is reflected in the red of the meat and the white sauce on top. The beef was served with lemon, olive oil and white truffle or parmesan cheese.

With this recipe we have swapped the beef for venison and kept with the red and white tones adding parsnip and beet leaves, but still made the dish into a masterpiece on the plate with the decoration of the garnishes.

Remember, art is in the eye of the beholder, so whatever yours looks like on the plate is up to you!!



VENISON

- 1 x venison loin, trimmed and cut in ½ lengthways, silver skin removed
- 1 tsp thyme, freshly chopped
- 1 tsp rosemary, freshly chopped
- 2 garlic cloves. thinly sliced
- A little olive oil

Method

Rub the venison loin with the herbs, a splash of oil and garlic, and leave to marinade overnight in the fridge.

The following day remove the herbs from the venison and sear on all sides in a seriously hot pan, aiming for a nice colour on the outside and raw on the inside. Cool quickly to stop any further cooking and then wrap tightly in clingfilm and place into the freezer to firm up. Don't allow it to freeze solid as you won't be able to slice it.

When entirely chilled, remove the plastic wrap from the venison and slice very thinly. Place straight onto the serving dish as it will be very difficult to move later. A bacon slicer is perfect for slicing the meat thinly, but otherwise use a thin bladed and very sharp knife with a flat blade, such as a thin Asian vegetable knife, as this will be easier to work with.

Remember when searing at high temperatures always oil the meat and not the pan.

Allow the meat to cool before wrapping in clingfilm, otherwise it will hold the heat and continue to cook the meat inside.



PUREE

I'm using parsnip but you could also use pumpkin or similar.

- 1 large parsnip, peeled and chopped into rough pieces
- Milk
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1 bay leaf

Method

Place parsnip into a small pan and cover with milk, add butter and bay leaf, bring to the boil, and then turn down to a simmer to cook until soft.

Drain the liquid and reserve. Purée parsnip in a food processor

VEGETABLE CRISPS

For this dish you could use either parsnip, beetroot or kumara.

Peel and thinly slice the vegetables. Fry in vegetable oil until crisp, season with salt and reserve for plate up.



TO DRESS THE PLATE

You already have the thinly sliced venison on the serving plate/platter.

Pipe nice bulbs of the purée in a random fashion on top of the meat.

Place/scatter the remaining ingredients on top of the venison.

Add a squeeze of lemon and drizzle the extra virgin olive oil to finish, with a pinch of flaky sea salt.

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