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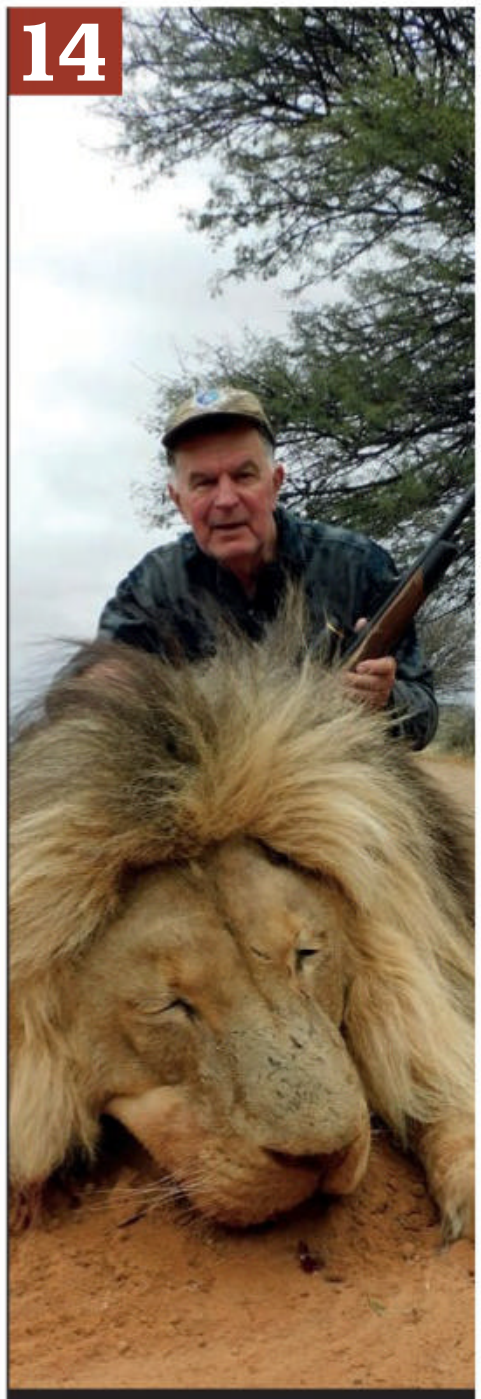

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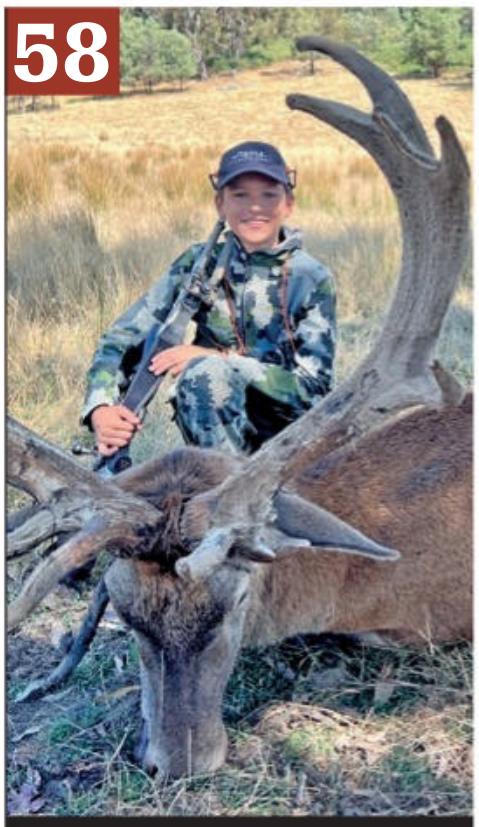

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ON THE COVER

A Queensland rusa stag photographed by Jared Matthews.

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RESPECT HUNT RESPONSIBLY

Lions and lines in the sand

South Africa is about to ban most hunting of lions

Hunting of lions is an extremely controversial topic

PIC: GETTY IMAGES

WE don't often have a lion hunting story to publish but it will only become even more rare as South Africa implements its ban on the commercial breeding of lions, and therefore the hunting of them. The timetable for the ban is not fully established but it won't be long before there will be no such lions to hunt.

One major reason for the ban is to stop what's derisively called "canned" hunting — hunting farmed lions in fenced enclosures. At its worst, it probably deserves the derision; at its best, it is arguably a sustainable and ethical way of managing a lion population. Better minds than mine have argued for and against for years and I don't intend to explore the issue now.

That sort of hunting is just one aspect of lion hunting in Africa generally. Other nations still permit it.

All legal hunting of lions is managed in some way, ultimately by governments who issue permits to guides. The bottom line is that hunting lions (or anything similar) can only continue if it is managed both ethically and sustainably.

> "Lion hunting is arguably a sustainable and ethical way of managing a lion population"

Yes, but who defines what's ethical and sustainable, and how do they do it?

The situation is an intense contrast with the hunting scene here in Australia, where human population, native wildlife, ferals and environmental management are so vastly different. We're extremely lucky in comparison because we have so many hunting opportunities. Just look at the reach of feral animal populations!

However, one thing looks much the same in light of South Africa's ban on bred lion hunting: with a few exceptions, we seem to have governments intent on minimising our ability to hunt.

That looks like very poor conservation management to me. Maybe they think we'll wipe out the lions.

MICK MATHESON
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SPORTING SHOOTER

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Mail your letters to: **The Technical Editor, 3 Reef Street, Hill End, NSW 2850.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Loading the 6.5x68mm RWS

Q Recently, I acquired an unusual Mauser which doesn't look anything like the Model 1898. It has the markings "Mauser 2000" and the calibre "6.5x68mm". My uncle had owned this rifle for 30 or 40 years before he gave it to me. It came with a Simplex die set and 30 once-fired cases and 70 that are unfired.

I seem to remember that you owned a Mauser 66 in this calibre and reloaded the ammunition and hunted with it. Could you suggest a primer, suitable powder and a couple of moderate loads so that I can start using this rifle for deer hunting?
Patrick Roberts

A Back in the late 1980s the Mauser Werke presented me with a Mauser 66 and two barrels — for the 6.5x68mm and the 8x68S. I worked up loads for the 6.5x68 with bullets weighing from 85 to 160gn. Back in those days I used powders like W-785 and H4831 with light bullets and slower burning IMR7828 and AR2214 with heavy ones.

Its huge case and small neck dictate low efficiency, even with slow-burning powders, and it lags behind the .270 and .280 Rem as a deer cartridge at normal ranges, while a 100gn bullet at 3700fps made it a sizzling predator cartridge.

Of the available powders, I suggest you use AR2213sc, which works fairly well.

The 6.5x68mm RWS shoots long, heavy .264" bullets at high velocity. They fly flat and hit hard away out yonder

I got very good accuracy with the Hornady 129gn Interlock and 63gn of AR2213sc which clocked 3100fps, while 61gn behind the Speer 140gn spitzer did 2900fps. These loads were safe in my rifle, but I suggest you work up from two grains less. Those loads should have usable pressures and long case and barrel life.

I learned to love the 6.5x68 in spite of the fact that it's over-bore capacity. It's certainly a ballistically potent long-range rifle for hunting big game. That's why I now really love my Browning X-Bolt in 26 Nosler.

Reloading belted cases

Q I am about to start reloading for my .300 Winchester Magnum and since this is my first attempt at reloading a belted case, I have a few queries. I have read that it is best to neck-resize cases until they get a bit tight to chamber and then to set the full-length die to bump the shoulder back only 0.001" or 0.002" (0.025-0.05mm) so that it head-spaces on the shoulder (I have purchased a Hornady Lock-N-Load headspace gauge).

I have heard that this can eventually result in the cases bulging just above the belt, causing chambering problems. I would appreciate your thoughts on this.

I am loading 175gn Atomic 29 projectiles using AR2213sc. Any suggestions for a starting load for this combo?
Bruce Doyle

A Reloading belted cases does require a little more care than does rimless cases. You could neck-size only until the bolt closes very hard on a reloaded round — usually after two or three full-power reloads — and then full-length size the cases and check their length. If they are 2.62" (66.5mm) long, trim them back to 2.61" (66.3).

I have never had any belted cases that started bulging just above the belt: no idea where this came from. The main point to remember is never set the die down hard against the shell holder until you are certain that the die and the chamber have the same dimensions at that setting.

Head-to-shoulder length is critical. Forget the belt and ensure that the case head-spaces on the shoulder like a rimless case does. This is done by unscrewing the die body until it just fails to touch the shoulder on a fired case, run the case into the die then try to chamber it. If it is tight or won't enter the chamber fully, screw the die body down a half-turn and try again. Repeat this process, slowly turning the die down a little at a time until the case will enter the chamber with a slight feel. This tells you that the case is actually head-spacing on the shoulder. Lock the die in this position and you can be sure that your .300 Win Mag cases are not being lengthened and shortened each time they are fired, something that can cause case head separations.

> "Reloading belted cases does require a little more care"

One other thing: I suggest you buy a separate neck-sizing die as problems can arise from partially sizing cases in a full-length die.

For a starting load, I suggest working up from 69gn to a possible maximum 75gn which gets 2966fps with the 175gn Atomic 29.

.300 Weatherby Magnum a good choice

Q I have just purchased a Sauer 202 in .300 Weatherby Magnum and would like a good load using Barnes 150gn TTSX projectiles that is accurate and hard hitting. I liked your review of the Caldwell Lead Sled so much that I have ordered one. Thanks.
Wayne Moeth

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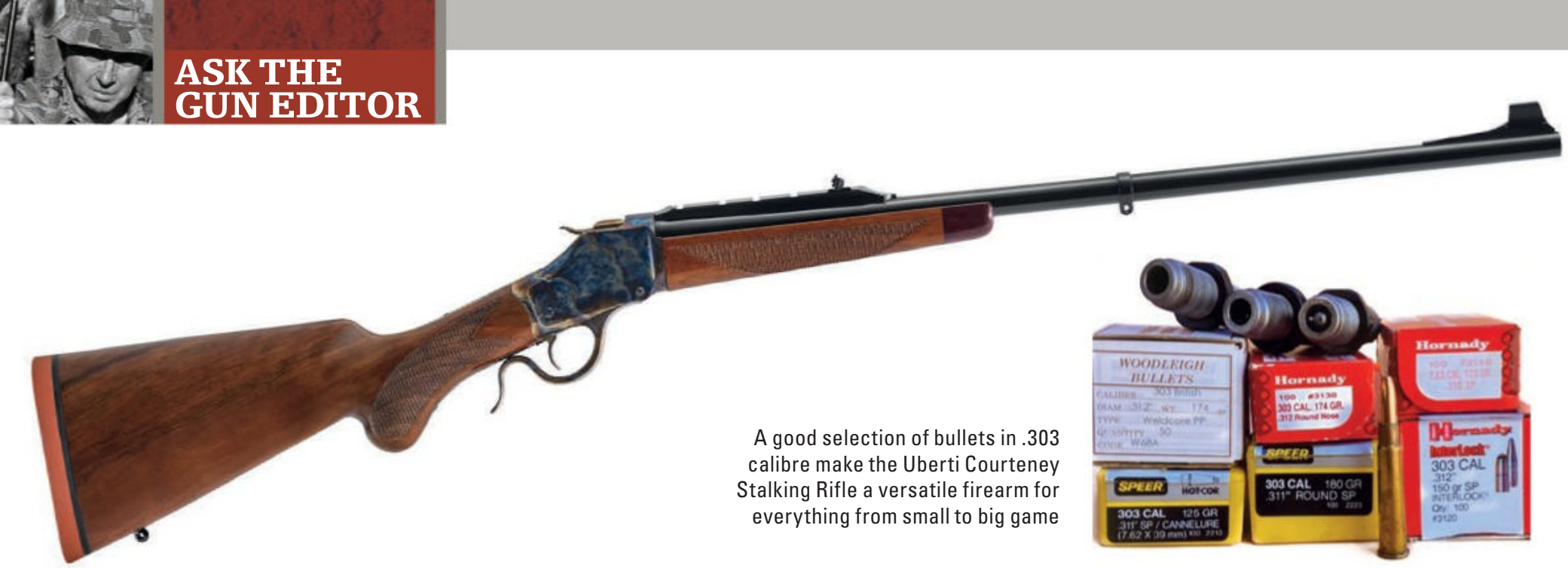

A good selection of bullets in .303 calibre make the Uberti Courteney Stalking Rifle a versatile firearm for everything from small to big game

A Congratulations! The Sauer 202 is a fine rifle and the .300 Weatherby Magnum is my favourite .30-calibre magnum. From memory, the Sauer 202 has a 24" barrel.

With AR2213sc the listed maximum charge behind the Barnes 150gn TTSX is 87.5gn for 3400fps. I suggest you load 85gn for about 3300fps which will be easier on your cases and barrel. If you need a heavier bullet for big game at a later date, I suggest the Speer 180gn Hot Cor or Grand Slam and 84gn for 3150fps. Another good load has the 200gn Hot Cor and 83gn of AR2213sc for 2980fps.

These loads were safe to use in the rifles I shot them in and grouped 1 MOA, but as always use caution and work up from three grains below.

Uberti's beautifully configured Courteney Stalking Rifle

Q I went crazy, shed all caution, let my head go (in my wife's summation) and spent big on a Uberti 1885 Courteney Stalking Rifle. It is chambered in .303 British and is a modern version of the fine British stalking rifles of over a century ago, named for that great African hunter Frederick Courteney Selous. As soon as I laid eyes on one in my local gunshop I had to have it.

Could you recommend a scope for it, one that's not big and heavy or too expensive (I've been forgiven and my wife is paying for a scope). Also, could you recommend a die set for the .303 British, a good brand of unprimed brass, what powder and primer to use, and a good load for the 150gn Hornady Interlock bullet?

I can't wait to take the outfit hunting. My wife is anxious for me to go, too. She says it may bring me back to my senses.
Justin Alexander

A A Lee die set is most affordable and comes with a shell-holder. I've been loading the Speer 150gn spitzer and 43gn of AR2208 for 2663fps and the 174gn Hornady and 40gn of AR2208 for 2420fps.

Unlike the original 1885 Winchester Hi-Wall, the Uberti does not cock the hammer as the breechblock is lowered, so the hammer has to be cocked manually after being loaded. Nor does it eject a fired case as the lever is lowered: it only extracts it and you have to remove the case with your fingers. Still, the Uberti has the advantage of having a quarter-rib sight with an integral Picatinny rail with cross-slots machined on it which takes Weaver-style scope rings.

I recommend Nikko Stirling Steel-Lok Q/D medium-height rings which will allow you to remove the scope without affecting zero and use the iron sights. A neat, moderately priced scope is the Sightron S1 1.75-5x32 or something similar — a 2-7x or 2.5-8x — but more expensive.

I like the looks of the Uberti Courteney with its colour case hardened lever, breechblock, hammer, trigger and the stock with rounded grip and black fore-arm tip. Enjoy your investment and tell the wife I'm right behind you (just in case she starts throwing things).

Short .270 wildcats

Q I usually read Ask the Gun Editor and Practical Reloading before any other articles in *Sporting Shooter*. Thanks for all the interesting articles over the years.

I was reading an American shooting forum about the 7mm-08 which got me thinking about the .308 Winchester and its many offspring. The ones I could think of were: .243 Win, .25 Souper, .260 Rem, 7mm-08, .307 Win, .308 Marlin, .338 Federal, .356 and .358 Win.

This prompted a question for you. Do you know whether anyone has ever made a .270 based on the .308 case? In my limited research I have been unable to find any reference to such a round.
Rod McGovern

A Some of the very first wildcats on the .308 case were .270s. They include the .270-308 made by simply necking down the .308 to .270, and the .270 Redding which was fire-formed to have a relatively straight body and a 30-degree shoulder and reportedly produced .270 Winchester ballistics with 10 percent less powder.

I've also heard of the .270 Titus which was based on the .308 case, but can find no data on it.

Good to know you like reading my articles.

Reloads that wouldn't chamber

Q I have been a long-time user of W760 Ball powder which is no longer available in Australia. That's a great pity as it was easy to measure and gave me good performance in my 7mm-08 and .243 Win. I have been studying your reloading manual and felt that AR2209 would be a good substitute. What do you think?

Can you suggest a couple of loads? I used Barnes 140gn TSX and 47gn of W760 in my 7mm-08. I'm using 33gn of AR2206H in my .243 Win. I thought I could use AR2209 in both.

As an aside: I reloaded a stack of 7mm-08 cases for my son the other day and ran them through a full set of dies. Then, as I am in the habit of doing, I ran them all through his rifle before I reloaded them to make sure they would chamber OK and found 18 that would not chamber, all of which were Winchester cases. I adjusted my die slightly, sized them again and they all chambered perfectly. Have you ever struck this when reloading Winchester brass?
Michael Bennet

A I've found AR2209 to be a good powder for the .243 Win. The best loads in my Sako

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L581 were: Sierra 70gn and 47gn AR2209 for 3440fps: Sierra 85gn HPBT and 45gn AR2209 for 3190fps: and Sierra 100gn SBT and 43gn of AR2209 for 3005fps. These velocities were attained in a 24" barrel.

In my Remington 700 7mm-08 I used the following load: The Barnes 140gn TSX and 45gn of AR2209 for 2785fps.

It is hard to say why 18 of your cases wouldn't chamber, but you may have mixed up the cases. The ones that wouldn't chamber may have been fired in your rifle — not your son's — and been a bit oversized, needing a bit more sizing down. I have never struck this problem when using Winchester cases that were all fired in my rifle.

An alternative propellant for the 6.5 PRC

Q My grandson has a Bergara in 6.5 PRC. It's one of the chassis-stocked knock-em-down-at-a-mile jobs. However, it doesn't like the Hornady 143gn ELD-X projectile, nor either of the powders listed for this cartridge — AR2217 and AR2225. Can you suggest another powder/projectile load that he could try?

I thought that maybe AR2213sc would work with projectiles up to 140-150gn in weight, but can find no load data to confirm this. Any suggestions you could offer would be greatly appreciated.
Ian Cameron

A The problem with using AR2213sc or a faster powder is that the charges leave too much air space in the case, which can be dangerous. The recommended propellants (at least the ones we can get) are AR2217 and AR2225.

Two loads that shot well in the Mauser M18 I reviewed were: Hornady 140gn spire-point and 57gn of AR2225 for 2911fps, which was a very accurate load; and the Nosler 142gn ABLR and 58gn of AR2217 for 2900fps. Let me know how these loads go, especially the first one.

Nick used a .375 H&H fitted with a 3x scope shooting the Hornady 300gn solid to take about 160 buffaloes

Deterioration or something else?

Q I have experienced a problem with powders deteriorating in storage. Several canisters of old Mulwex powders and DuPont IMR powders were found to contain a fairly heavy accumulation of a reddy-brown, rust-like powder.

These canisters were purchased 20 years or more ago and had been stored in cool and stable conditions in old deep freezers. I have been obliged to junk a lot of this powder, which seems to have deteriorated during storage. Have you ever encountered a similar problem?
Tony Dyer

A I sure have! Like you, I bought a lot of cheap powder decades ago which, when I opened the canisters, appeared to have gone off. When I removed the lids and shook the canisters, they emitted a cloud of reddy dust.

After I had thrown out (wasted) several kilos of powder that had been stored in steel containers I realised that this condition didn't exist when powders were packed in plastic or cardboard containers like those used by Hercules and later Alliant. After I had more ADI powders get 'rusty' in steel cans after only a few years, I decided that the culprit had to be severe rusting on the insides of the metal canisters, which was evident when the powder was emptied out. The powder, however, looked clean enough and had no smell, so I sieved out the rust and transferred the power to plastic bottles.

I've since assembled reloads with these powders without any dramas. The problem was caused, I believe, by storing powder in tins, and I notice that powder manufacturers no longer do this.

But I'd urge caution since I have even had powder deteriorate in the case and seep out of the neck of the case around the seated bullet. For this reason, I'll leave it up to the individual to determine how to treat any old powder you may have.

A puzzling combination

Q I recently purchased a new Remington Model 700 in .375 H&H and a 4-16x44 scope. The rifle is only to be used for hunting sambar deer, mostly by stalking. I also bought a Leupold steel one-piece base with Warne low rings. I stipulated that the base was to be zero MOA, but they still fitted a 20 MOA base. I asked them to change it but was persuaded (or conned into believing) that the 20 MOA base was fine and I wouldn't notice any difference.

I have already sighted in the outfit to the point-blank range suggested in your book, but will have no hesitation in having them change the base if warranted. I have very little knowledge of how a 20 MOA base affects scope sighting. What would you suggest?
Rod Sommerville

A Firstly, I think you bought the wrong scope if your rifle is to be used for hunting sambar by stalking. I'd have chosen something like a 1.5-6x, which has a wide field of view on the lowest power since many shots at sambar are taken at fairly close range and often on the run. Even 4x can handicap the hunter at close distances, and 16x is definitely for varmint hunting.

I used a Winchester Model 70 in .375 H&H when I was guiding buffalo hunters years ago. It was fitted with a 3x Leupold scope and it worked just fine. Later, I had the rifle re-chambered to .375 Weatherby and fitted a 2-7x scope. Today, it seems everybody is over-scoped. A gun shop in Sydney once sold a reader a 4-16x to go on a Winchester 94 .30-30. What the hell are these counter jumpers thinking? All of my big game rifles have Swarovski 3-9x36 scopes and that's a good range of magnification for any hunting situation.

I'd definitely get the gunshop to change the base and I think medium height rings would be better for all-round shooting, particularly from offhand. They shouldn't have given you a 20 MOA base in the first place. You are right: they conned you. You only need a 20 MOA base if you are going to shoot targets at 1000m.

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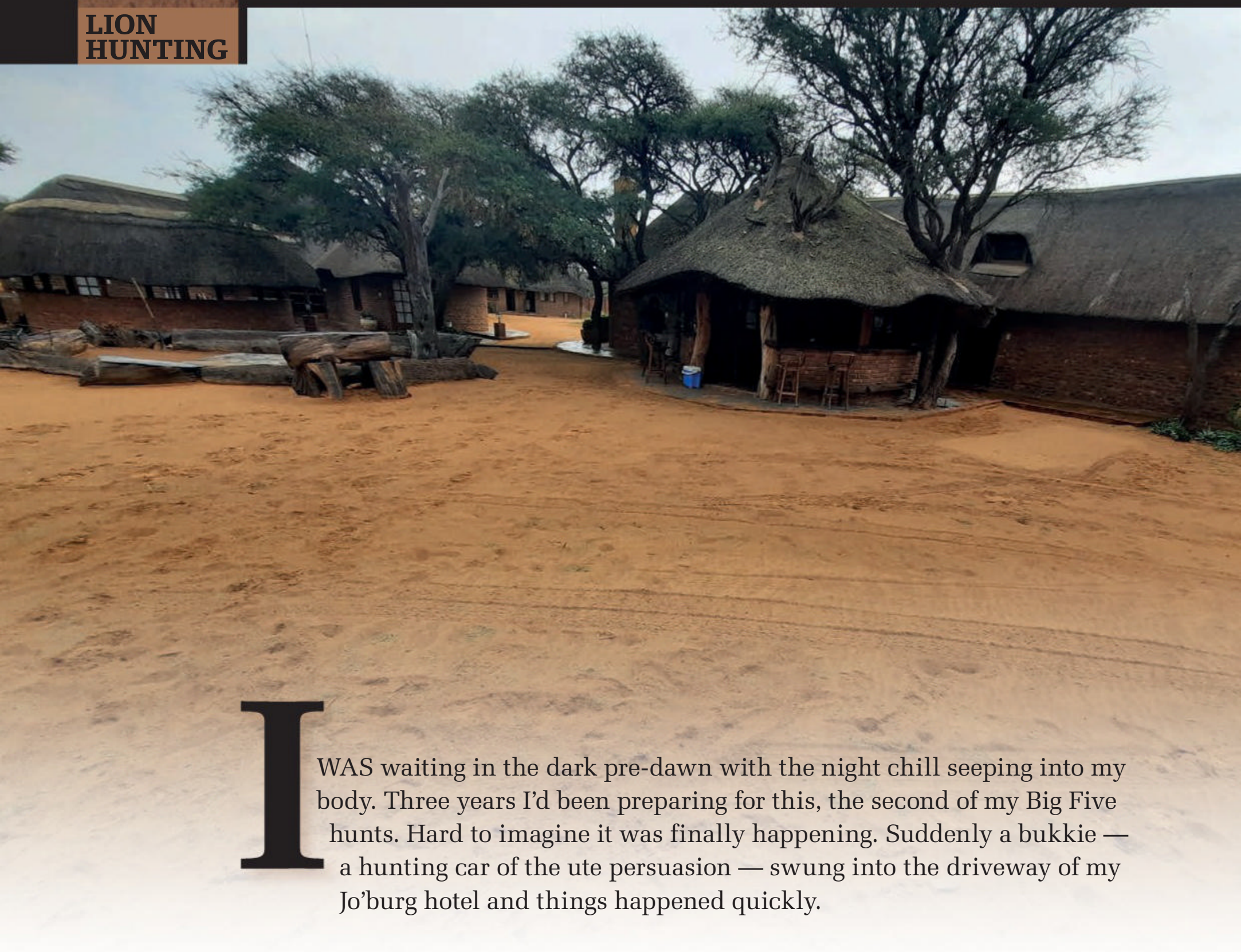
Ethical conservation-management hunts are the real deal. Kevin

Lion in the Kalahari thorns

White was on foot with a snarling lion just 20 metres away

Kevin's lion measured 287cm
'between pegs' in the old way of doing it



I WAS waiting in the dark pre-dawn with the night chill seeping into my body. Three years I'd been preparing for this, the second of my Big Five hunts. Hard to imagine it was finally happening. Suddenly a bukkie — a hunting car of the ute persuasion — swung into the driveway of my Jo'burg hotel and things happened quickly.

MY professional hunter, or PH, Jaco, was out from the driver's side and pressing the flesh enthusiastically. It was evident we would be mates for the duration. He was young at 35-ish with all the enthusiasm in the world. We talked lions and hunting and lions and rifles and lions and conservation for the five-hour drive out to the concession on the edge of the Kalahari desert.

There are two methods of lion hunting commonly used in Africa today. The most common is baiting. Large pieces of game meat are hung where lions will find them, usually near water. When a lion starts feeding from a bait, a hide is built close by.

This method is illegal in some African countries. It uses the essential need for water as a lure and is considered unfair. It's also quite expensive as the bait animals will cost $US3000 for buffalo or $US2000 for zebra.

The other method is to drive the tracks and visit the waterholes early in the morning, trying to spot fresh tracks that are followed up on foot. If you catch up, you then decide if the lion is one to be targeted as a shootable trophy.

When lions are too old or are injured and cannot catch wild game, they often start killing cattle or goats. Herders sometimes try to defend their stock, as a cow often represents the sole store of wealth and source of income for a family. It is not long before this results in dead herders and man-eating lions. Man-eating becomes habit forming, as men are easier to kill than cattle.

I like to hunt South Africa in August, as not only is the temperature more pleasant but the vegetation has died off, giving better visibility. This year was different after heavy rains early in the year. Grass was thigh-high everywhere and even cricket bats were sprouting green shoots.

As we drove, the country was changing — grass and cropland gradually disappearing as more and more red Kalahari sand became visible. At the concession, I was amazed by the standard of the accommodation. My chalet was every bit as good as the hotel in Jo'burg and our dedicated chef left nothing to be desired. I'll be expecting a better standard of shearers' quarters next time I'm in Bourke!

We went to the range to adjust zero. Jaco recommended 'on' at 100, which would put me barely above line of sight at 40m. We would be shooting close. Dangerous game is nearly always taken at less than 40m.

The rifle I used was a Weatherby Mk V in .375 H&H. The scope was a Leupold 2.5-8x. I used Nosler

> It was vital to stay line abreast, particularly in the event of a charge"

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The main camp was as comfortable as a city hotel

2 The lion had a broken upper canine tooth, possibly a contributor to his cattle-killing ways

3 A typical waterhole on the Kalahari concession

Partition 300gn projectiles. I like Partitions on tough game.

I met the other PH who would be backing me up during the hunt. South African law requires two PHs in attendance on dangerous game hunts. He was a nice guy, coincidentally with White as his surname. To prevent any problem with hurt feelings over age discrimination or other confusion, I said he should be called Whitey and I could be Mr White. Well, that didn't work out either but we got by.

The dinner banter was very much flavoured by war stories featuring lions chewing on uneducated tourists. The theme seemed to be, "If this Aussie has come to be frightened by a lion, we might as well start now!" I absorbed it all — food, banter and a couple of glasses of wine.

Despite the flight and the drive, excitement made it hard to sleep that night. At 5am one of the camp boys delivered morning coffee and rusks. I wandered out to the braai (fire pit) where the team was gathering and warming. We loaded ourselves into the bukkie to start scouting.

We had driven for about an hour when we cut track crossing the road. Our two Kalahari Bushmen trackers were sure this was a good sized lion. We unloaded from the bukkie, preparing for a long walk. The morning breeze was across us and we would have to be careful with it as we moved on.

The trackers were about 10m apart and about 10m in front of me.

> We just couldn't move through this interwoven, twisted mass of thorns"

A PH was on each side of us. It was vital to stay line abreast, particularly in the event of a charge. Holding our position would ensure a clear line of fire from the wings to stop the beast. It is apparently about a fifty-fifty call as to whether a lion will charge or run.

My mission was to scan the first 30m, covering the unarmed trackers who were focused on the ground in front of them. The PHs on the left and right wings were covering country further out and backing me up on the near ground as well.

The morning was cool, overcast skies saving us from the heat which I had expected. The lion track ran straight, as it often does away from water. When confident of their safety, lions will start to look for a place to lie up.

Two hours in, we hit a patch of hard ground. Same red ochre colour as the sand but hard, not holding the track. No indentations, no grass growing through it to bend or break, showing passage or direction. We hunted on, holding true to the original direction. We hit the edge of the hard stuff.

We — meaning 'they', as nobody wanted the new guy messing up their storyboard — cast around in semi-circles, trying to pick up the run of track where it left the rock. The tracks had vanished. Like he'd been beamed up, gone.

We walked back to the bukkie. Straight line, quickest route possible. The Bushmen were good, never a doubt, walking straight to the truck. Back to camp for lunch and rejuvenation for tomorrow.

Day three began the same. We left the main camp looking at the sun rising above the trees, and drove a bit longer until we found viable tracks. These ran along the road for a couple of kilometres. Cats like the dirt roads because they are more comfortable on their paws. The track stood out clearly and we gained about an hour on the quarry.

During the early 1900s 'galloping' lions was the popular sport out of Nairobi, Kenya. The Athi Plains held bountiful amounts of game and lions came following these herds. From the comfort of the Toyota, I could see the benefits of horse hunting, rather than using Shanks' pony. The gentlemen colonists often used packs of dogs to locate the lions, although they were more often spotted from the horse, rather than tracked the way we were trying to do.

One of my references on such things is *Game Ranger's Handbook* by Blayney Percival. He was Kenya's first permanent game ranger, in charge of the game reserve of 570,000 square kilometres on the Athi Plains. His preferred firearm for lions was a .256 Mannlicher. He liked the way

ON THIS PAGE

4 A tangle of blackthorns

5 The .375 H&H cartridge gives you some idea of the size of the lion's pad

6 Our lion hunting team, back row from left: CJ the driver, Jaco the PH, Whitey the PH. Front row from left: Clive and Roger, our Bushmen trackers

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SIFA

> I saw a magnificent Kalahari black-maned male lion — snarling at us”

it was light enough to be shot with one hand! Must be a big difference, having a fast horse underneath you.

Then we walked and we walked. Three hours on, the lion was starting to take an interest in thorn bush clumps. He’s looking to lie down, I thought. I started taking an interest in the thorn bushes too.

Suddenly, we were in a world of twisted, matted thorn. It had absorbed him like he was born in it. The tracks were still with us but we just couldn’t move through this interwoven, twisted mass. We struggled to turn around to get out the way we’d come. Beaten again. We didn’t have pangas, we just had to break branches without getting a fist full of thorns.

Next day we found tracks early in the morning at a waterhole and spent three hours walking them up. Adrenaline charged through me during the last hour, knowing we were gaining on a potential man-eater, probably lurking behind one of the many thorn bushes or clumps of thigh-high yellow grass.

The lion had pursued a rather straight course away from the water, but now started a more circuitous course, taking an interest in the larger clumps of thorn bush we were moving through, looking for a place to lie. I began kneeling down to scan under the patches of thorn as we approached. Jaco, on the right, suddenly beckoned to me to come to him. As I did, I saw about 40m in front a magnificent Kalahari black-maned male lion — snarling at us.

We were lucky: my lion was framed rather than obscured by the thorn thicket. His whole left side and shoulder were perfectly clear.

The lion watched us closing on him. Jaco said, later, that in all his time hunting lion, he had never found one that wasn’t watching. I could see the fight-or-flight discussion going on in its head. I had 200kg of powerhouse plotting my demise, slightly more than a cricket pitch away.

We closed to 20m, sure kill range.

I squeezed off a shot into his shoulder. The lion somersaulted, as cats usually respond. By the time he’d touched down, I’d worked the bolt and was able to put a second shot into his chest. That stilled him.

I covered him for another five minutes before we carefully walked in. Many hunters have been killed by ‘dead’ lions.

Time for congratulations, particularly to our Bushmen trackers. It was an act of magic deciphering these tracks to maintain contact over three hours, through long grass and sand base.

ON THIS PAGE

7 The camp’s braai, where some of the finest South African food is cooked

8 Despite cooler weather, there were enough puff adders around to make us careful where we stepped

FAST FACTS

Measurements and logistics

My lion measured, unofficially, 9ft 5in (287cm) between pegs. Today, cat trophies are graded on the skull size. Measurement of skins has always been open to interpretation, due to the ability to stretch skins. However, there’s more tradition in measurement ‘between pegs’ and I was never going to see the skull anyway. Skull measurement is more reliable and repeatable.

Under current law, no part of a lion can be imported into Australia. I have to make do with photographs to record my hunt.

This whole hunt was arranged for me by White Lion Safaris. The principal, Ricus de Villiers, produced a first class experience. His service will also cover help importing and exporting your firearms and ammunition. White Lion operates on several concessions in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. All game animals can be hunted. See whitelionsafaris.com.

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SCAN ME!

BY NICK HARVEY

Gunwerks ClymR

This precision bolt-action rifle combines leading-edge materials with performance-driven design. It's something special

GUNWERKS, based Wyoming, USA, specialises in long-range hunting and precision rifles. The ClymR is Gunwerks' first bolt-action and it's a good one — easily one of the most accurate factory rifles that we've tested for some time. Gunwerks did all the design work, engineering and manufacturing for the ClymR in-house to avoid being reliant upon outside elements.

The ClymR illustrates just how much performance can be packed into a modern bolt-action rifle.

It is a semi-custom sporting rifle built for mountain hunting and available as a system with multiple options. At 2.72kg (6lb even), it is a definite lightweight. With high-tech carbon-fibres reinforcing both its barrel and stock, this high-country specialist has been designed to outperform most other rifles in its weight class.

Acquiring a handily light rifle is easy. A number of modern sporters fall into that category. It's the light-light rifle that's hard to make effective. Evidently, Gunwerks worked out how light a sporter can be and still retain the handiness, balance and surely steady accuracy we need in hunting.

This was accomplished by using weight-reducing carbon-fibre material, not only in the stock but by wrapping it around the barrel. This is the result of 25 years of developing technologies and different kinds of carbon-fibres which not only lighten rifle barrels but stiffen them, to increase accuracy and longevity. First a matrix of PAN (polyacrylonitrile) fibre and epoxy mixed with small, chopped sections of pitch fibres are wrapped around the steel barrel liner to form a base layer. Then a helical wrap is added, its angle adapted to suit different calibres and bullet weights.

Because PAN fibres have a thermal coefficient similar to barrel steel, they provide an extremely rigid structure that changes very little when heated and also damps the barrel's harmonic signature. Barrels vibrate like a tuning fork when fired. The carbon-fibre wrap's high modulus of elasticity lowers the amplitude of the vibrations and increases their frequency, thus improving accuracy.

> "There is utility behind every feature of the ClymR's stock"

The chopped pitch fibres connecting the long PAN fibres in the wrap conduct heat away from the bore at an amazing rate.

After a resin is applied and baked to bond the elements together, the barrel is rough ground to the correct dimensions. Then a fine grinding process applies a smooth surface, after which a steel bolster is fitted to the muzzle. The finished barrel is extremely rigid, durable and lightweight.

The epoxy resin used will tolerate hundreds of degrees of heat before it breaks down, but the pitch fibres cool so fast

1

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Round-bottomed receiver has a bolt release which doubles as the bolt stop in the left side of the bridge

2 The Gunswerks ClymR was designed to be the ultimate mountain hunting rifle but recoil is heavy in the .300 PRC chambering

3 The Leupold 5HD scope was great for long-range work but on the heavy side for a mountain rifle. Spirit level ensures greater precision at longer ranges

that the matrix never reaches that temperature.

The ClymR's carbon-fibre barrel is more substantial, and by all accounts stiffer, than those trim barrels found on many ultralights. It may outweigh the real 'soda straws', but not by nearly as much as an equally stout all-steel barrel does. The 56cm (22") barrel on our test .300 PRC measures 28.1mm (1.105") in diameter at the breech, tapering to 19.1mm (0.750") at the steel bolster backing the muzzle thread, resulting in a graceful contour. The barrel is available in three different lengths — 46, 51 and 56cm (18, 20 and 22") — and has a 32mm (1.25") muzzle brake attached using 5/8x24 TPI threads.

The ClymR's stock is constructed with aluminium pillars and blocks moulded into yarns/threads suspended in a synthetic base material to strengthen the stock without adding much weight. It is not really ultralight since it weighs 900g (2lb), but that's still light enough that mountain hunters no longer have to compromise performance for portability.

The stock comes in a choice of 10 paint finishes; there are 11 metal finish colours available.

With its unusual lines, the stock design is different, definitely not an American classic. Perfectly scaled to fit the slimline action, it is

designed so it enables shooters to mount and align the rifle quickly. The comb is thick, high and slopes upward toward the butt with no drop at heel. The nose of the comb is widely dished on each side for the base of the thumb of the shooting hand. The curved pistol grip is small in diameter and there's a palm swelling on both sides.

Push-button sling swivel cups are located 4cm below the comb, near the heel on each side. Another cup located on the forend tip's underside is accessed through a hole in a bipod mounting rail.

4

There is utility behind every feature of the ClymR's stock. The forend is flat on the bottom for tracking along a supported rest or pack. It certainly feels comfortable enough in the leading hand. The short Picatinny rail system under the forend tip will suit shooters looking to snap a bipod on the end. A soft rubber pad helps tame recoil.

Like most riflemakers today, Gunwerks favours free-floating the barrel full length.

The stock and barrelled action form the majority of the ClymR's individual lines which suggest a greater preference for practicality than tradition. They also make the rifle easy to mount and operate from a variety of shooting positions.

In developing the ClymR's action, Gunwerks wisely chose not to clone the Remington 700, as many have done before them. Aaron Davison, founder and CEO of Gunwerks, justified his decision by declaring he wanted to get away from the magazine and space constraints of the 700-clone world.

He wanted a reliable staggered-column magazine capable of housing three magnum cartridges while forming a flush fit with the belly of the stock. The Model 700 action isn't able to accommodate a magazine wide enough to accept a dual column of magnum cartridges, so a new action had to be designed.

Gunwerks successfully combined tried-and-true features with straightforward construction. The ClymR's receiver is a single machined part made of titanium but there's a standard GSL stainless steel alternative. Engineering is a strong point in terms of strength, performance and accuracy.

5

The modified design involves several differences. The ClymR's cylindrical receiver has an integrally machined, 7.9mm (.310") thick recoil lug instead of a washer clamped between receiver and barrel, and a wider, more streamlined tang. The test sample's 184mm (7.25") spacing between action screws and 127mm (5") of bolt travel makes efficient use of magnum cartridges like the .300 PRC, which has a maximum COL of 94.0mm (3.700"), and even the .375 Remington Ultra Mag which has a COL of 91.4mm (3.600").

The bolt is a work of art, a unitary CNC machining with six spiral flutes along the body to reduce weight and mitigate

6

7

8

9

ON THIS SPREAD

4 Stock is designed for ambidextrous use and is comfortable to hold in all shooting positions

5 Attractively business-like, the ClymR might cost a lot but it achieves all its aims

6 Stock's inletting is a neat fit and precise. Note the square of steel in the front of the recoil-lug recess

7 The thick-walled cylinder receiver of the ClymR we tested was titanium, which shaves 200g off a steel one. It has a large integral recoil lug

8 Bottom of forend tip has an attachment for a bipod and other accessories

9 The rifle came equipped with a muzzle brake threaded onto the barrel cap, one of almost endless options available

against grit interfering with the cycling of the action. Two massive locking lugs level with the bolt rim are slightly tapered to fit against a matching shallow taper in the barrel counterbore. These lugs turn 90 degrees to vertical as the bolt locks. About 30 percent represents initial bolt play and camming, leaving 60 degrees for lug/seat locking engagement.

The lugs ride in raceways cut into the receiver, a process that ensures precision and a smooth surface, eliminating the need for an anti-bind feature. Hardened cams on the bolt and receiver perform all operating functions as the bolt handle is raised and lowered. The cams are not only powerful but have sufficient engagement to avoid any hesitation during the opening and closing cycles.

A pair of internal plunger ejectors permits the two solid, identically sized lugs to give perfectly balanced support for the breech, forming an exceptionally strong locking pattern.

The ClymR's breech recesses the cartridge base into a deeply counterbored bolt head which in turn fits into a counterbore in the barrel. Like the Model 700, the cartridge head is surrounded by three rings of steel. Thanks to the counterbored breech, the close bolt nose fit can confine case-head failure and limit gas escape back into the enlarged and more susceptible portions of the receiver.

ACCURACY

FACTORY AMMUNITION

Load	Velocity (fps)	Accuracy (inches)		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Hornady 212gn ELD-X	2765	0.56	0.78	0.69
Hornady 225gn ELD-M	2725	0.75	0.90	0.86

HANDLOADS

Bullet	Powder (type)	Charge (gn)	Velocity (fps)	Accuracy (inches)		
				Smallest	Largest	Average
Barnes TSX180g	AR2225	82	3085	0.78	0.98	0.88
Nosler 190gn	AR2217	81	3005	0.85	1.20	1.00
Hornady 200gn ELD-X	AR2213sc	76	2976	0.65	0.82	0.78
Hornady 212gn ELD-X	AR2225	78	2777	0.75	0.92	0.84

Accuracy and velocity are the average of four groups of three shots with factory ammunition and five shots with handloads, measured with a MagnetoSpeed chronograph.

Another plus: Gunwerks ignored Remington's tiny internal C-spring extractor with its retaining lip which weakened the bolt nose, replacing it with a narrow hook enclosed in the lower bolt lug. It sits above the lug and is enclosed inside the barrel counterbore, allowing a close bolt nose fit and minimum cartridge head protrusion.

The root of the integral bolt handle enters a notch in the receiver to serve as a backup. The straight handle has a lightening vent and the alloy knob is held on by a screw. The distinctively shaped bolt sleeve is solid and sculptured with angled surfaces.

The trigger is from TriggerTech and it breaks at a consistent 900g (2lb) with not the least hint of any creep or over-travel. Gunwerks offers the option of a Timney Hunter Elite trigger designed to 'elevate' accuracy.

The receiver's tang is relieved on its right side for a two-position safety lever, which is incorporated into the trigger housing. The safe position does not lock the bolt handle down. The trim, 19mm long and 5mm wide bolt release on the left side of the bridge is pressed inward to allow the bolt to be withdrawn.

The one-piece aluminium bottom metal incorporates a squared-off trigger guard that houses the magazine release catch inside its front face. The magazine is a staggered, top-loaded type and the alloy follower is Cerakoted a bright orange and tensioned by a W-spring. A hinged floorplate supports the follower assembly, while the receiver rails form lips to position the top cartridge for pick-up by the bolt.

Each ClymR rifle comes packed in a beautiful Gunwerks rifle case with cut-outs in its foam liner. The rifle was equipped with a Leupold 5HD 3.6-18x44 scope in Australian-made scope rings by Porter Machine Works. Scope and mounts together added 900g to the all-up weight of the outfit. It would add too much heft to a mountain rifle, but would be an invaluable aid in long-range shooting.

ABOVE: The rifle taken down showing the fluted bolt and squarish trigger guard with alloy follower and drop-out floorplate

ABOVE: The Gunwerks rifle gave superb accuracy when tested using factory ammunition and handloads

SPECS

Manufacturer: Gunwerks, Cody, Wyoming

Type: Turn-bolt action

Calibre: .300 PRC (tested)

Capacity: 3 rounds

Barrel: 56cm (22"), 1:8.5 RH twist

Overall length: 109cm (43")

Weight: 2.72kg (6lb) bare

Stock: Carbon-fibre

Length of pull: 345mm (13.5")

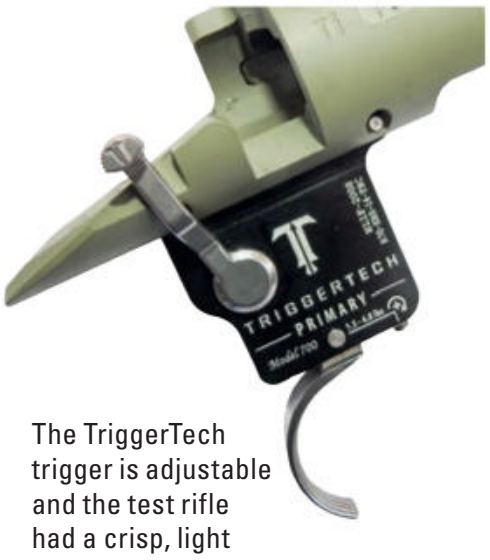
Finish: Cerakoted metal, painted stock

Trigger: TriggerTech, 900g (2lb) pull

Sights: None, drilled and tapped for scope

Price: From $10,990

Distributor:
Wilderness Precision, wildernessprecision.com.au



The TriggerTech trigger is adjustable and the test rifle had a crisp, light 900g pull that was totally inert

Ammunition supplied for testing was Hornady Precision Hunter loaded with aerodynamically superior 212gn ELD-X bullets at a nominal 2850fps. The .300 PRC was introduced in 2019 and although it doesn't have magnum in its name, it delivers magnum performance.

My first shot with the new rifle was a blast — literally. The rearward blast of exhaust gases from the four-port muzzle brake was considerably more than I was expecting. Nevertheless, it required only three shots to get the first bullet in the bullseye at 100yd (91m) and the brake's effectiveness became obvious. At an all-up 3.5kg (7¾lb), this scoped Gunwerks rifle was pretty light for a cartridge of that power; it kicked like a mule!

Accuracy testing demonstrated that the ClymR was a consistently accurate rifle. High-tech materials and modern construction techniques represent the cutting edge of what's possible with modern bolt-action rifles today. The Gunwerks action is straightforward, strong and reliable, and the breeching design sets a high standard of safety. The stock is sturdy, ergonomic, comfortable, weather resistant and functions beautifully.

You'll pay more to gain this kind of performance, but genuine hunter-riflemen will appreciate the latest achievement in modern rifle design.

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BY MICK MATHESON

The M98 Magnum's classic stock, excellent balance and hefty mass, along with a crisp trigger, ensure it is easy to shoot accurately

Mauser M98 Magnum Expert

After 125 years, the Mauser Model 98 is still a cut above the rest. The Magnum takes it further

WHEN you carry a Mauser M98 Magnum on a hunt, it is impossible to ignore the history, craftsmanship, quality and beauty of the rifle. They become part of the hunt. The rifle is so heavily imbued with these characteristics that your mind can morph it from hunting equipment into hunting partner. Shooting the Mauser to take game is as much a prize as the game itself.

Much of the appeal is the fact that the M98 is the original. The Mauser Model 1898 is the grandfather of modern bolt-action rifles. That statement is a simplification of the whole evolution of firearms but true enough. The current M98 is a subtle evolution of the original, built by Mauser in Germany to a design that's close enough to the first that no one can seriously deny its authenticity.

> **"The five-round magazine capacity in .375 H&H is outstanding"**

That's 125 years of history, some of it rocky and large chunks of it not written by Mauser, but no other rifle can boast such a long and respected life.

I won't repeat the whole timeline here but I will make a brief mention of the Magnum's place in the story. Mauser didn't make an action this large until 1911 when upmarket English rifle maker Rigby specifically asked for it. Mauser obliged but production of the magnum action ended when WWII started. It took until 2015 for Mauser to re-introduce it, in the form you see here, and today

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Grade 5 Turkish walnut stock is gorgeous. Mauser gives it a matte oiled finish

2 Fixed blade of the rear sight is your 50m aiming aid, while the flip-up leaves should put you on at 100m and 150m

3 Modernised safety lever swings horizontally, allowing easy use when a scope is mounted

The successful shot was taken quickly and under pressure, well within 50m"

Mauser is again making M98 Magnum barrelled actions for Rigby and others.

The Magnum action is both larger and stronger than the standard M98 action, its double square-bridge design putting a lot more metal in the critical parts of the receiver to cope not just with the .375 H&H Magnum cartridge but the more potent .416 Rigby and .450 Rigby as well. It has the refined gas-diversion features that made the Model 98 such a safe rifle if cases ruptured, and it has the third locking lug at the rear of the bolt body to back up the two main ones up front.

It has the large, non-rotating claw extractor that provides the much-lauded controlled round feeding that guarantees clean chambering of every round. No dangerous-game hunter would be without it.

The functionality of the M98 Magnum goes deep. The bolt is slick in its raceways, moving quickly back and forth to cycle rounds for follow-up shots, and the five-round magazine capacity in .375 H&H is outstanding — not that I can readily imagine a situation where they'd all be needed, but you never know. Capacity is four rounds in .416 and .450.

The staggered-row magazine is quick to load by thumbing cartridges into the top, and releasing the floorplate empties it.

The safety lever is a slender thing that swings back horizontally, well clear of any optics you might mount. Set it forward to fire, of course, and come back one notch to put it on safe with the bolt unlocked and back again to lock the bolt.

The square bridges have scope mounting bases milled into them, designed to accept tip-off mounts such as the excellent Hexalock ones on the test rifle. You can remove the scope in seconds to use the open sights and, all being equal, remount the scope and have the same point of impact.

You wouldn't want anything as crass as a Picatinny rail on your M98 Magnum, would you?

All M98 Magnums have safari express sights with a fixed leaf for 50m and two

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SIFA

ABOVE: A fine hunting rifle, the Mauser M98 has been refined to this level over its 125-year history

BELOW RIGHT: Black rosewood forend tip is a traditional touch

SPECS

Manufacturer: Mauser Jagdwaffen, Germany

Type: Bolt-action repeater

Barrel: 62cm (24.5”), cold hammer forged, 1:12 twist

Calibres: .375 H&H (tested), .416 Rigby, .450 Rigby

Magazine: 5 rounds, hinged floorplate type

Trigger: Single stage, approx 1.5kg

Safety: 3 position

Sights: Safari express iron sights; receiver milled for tip-off scope mount

Overall length: 118cm

Length of pull: 375mm

Weight: 4.6kg bare

Price: From about $21,000

Distributor: OSA Australia, osaaustralia.com.au

and a front bead to suit. They are soldered to the barrel, not screwed. The screws you see are for adjustments: front for elevation and rear for windage.

The Zeiss Conquest 1.1-6x24 scope mounted here is an ideal example of how a big-game magnum like this should be scoped. From the end of the muzzle out to 250 metres, there isn’t much you couldn’t guarantee hitting if it’s worth a .375 bullet.

The Mauser will do everything possible to ensure you succeed; it’s a very accurate rifle, judging by my experience, and its design facilities accurate shooting. I should add that I spent three days hunting in the field with this rifle, away from home, and didn’t get anywhere near a range to properly test accuracy (or do any measuring etc — you’ve probably noticed this is not a technical review) but I did sight in from a solid bench at a target 60m away. Using the limited amount of PPU factory ammunition I had, it put three shots into just over 1 MOA and I think parallax at that distance may have mucked it up a bit.

The single-stage trigger is lovely and crisp. The factory sets it at about 1.5kg, and that’s how it felt on this rifle. Spot on.

Then there’s the recoil, which may be on the heavy side because it’s a .375 H&H but it’s superbly managed by the rifle’s weight — 4.6kg bare, and just over 5kg scoped like this — and balance. The 62cm (24.5”) barrel is a heavier profile, shifting mass forward a little so that the rifle points very cooperatively.

The straight cut of the stock directs most of the recoil straight back into your shoulder with relatively little muzzle jump and no tendency for the comb to jolt your cheekbone. There’s some torsion, rolling the rifle to the left when you shoot, but it’s not excessive. Overall, it’s pleasant to shoot by magnum standards.

You’re less likely to whack yourself with the scope under recoil because Mauser gives the Magnum a generous butt length. Its length of pull is 375mm (14¾”), 10mm more than the M98 Standard and 20-30mm longer than your average rifle. Being 183cm (6’), I was comfortable with it when the rifle was in my shoulder, but at first I’d snag the butt in the armpit of my shirt as I raised it into position. I did a bit of practice until this stopped happening.

The slim forend lets you get a firm grasp with your forward hand. The pistol grip has a very gentle curve in the traditional fashion and is much more suitable than the more vertical grips that are so common now. No doubt Mauser knows you’re unlikely to shoot from the prone position with a bipod so the stock’s designers didn’t have to compromise.

The stock holds the action very tightly, too. As well as the two horizontal cross-bolts bracing the Magnum, the flat-bottomed action sits on bedding and the action screws run through pillars.

Sabatti

THE NEW ROVER FROM SABATTI IS NOW HERE!

The new Sabatti Rover action is a completely new design, made out of a solid billet of high-strength 7075 aluminum alloy, precision machined to minimize manufacturing-induced tolerances, then hard anodized. The receiver comes with an integral Picatinny rail allowing the mount of riflescopes or other aiming devices.

The new Sabatti Rover bolt is CNC machined from a bar of steel. The quality of this new three lugs, 60° opening throw bolt, along with a new sturdy extractor and a removable knob, make the new Sabatti Rover action one of the best currently available in the market.

ROVER HUNTER WITH DROP MAGAZINE

$1,750 SRP

CALIBRES

.243 Winchester | .270 Winchester
6,5x55 SE | 6.5 Creedmoor
7mm Remington Magnum
.30-06 Springfield | .308 Winchester

FEATURES

- Three lugs, 7075 aluminum alloy action
- Standard trigger
- Cold hammer forged barrel, standard rifling
- 3 shots removable polymer magazine
- Two positions safety, with bolt stop
- Polymer stock

ROVER ALASKAN WITH AICS MAGAZINE

$2,190 SRP

CALIBRES

7mm Remington Magnum
.30-06 Springfield | .308 Winchester
.300 Winchester Magnum
.338 Winchester Magnum

FEATURES

- Three lugs, 7075 aluminum alloy action
- Standard trigger
- Cold hammer forged barrel, standard rifling
- Muzzle brake (Jet-Brake)
- 7 shots AICS compatible removable magazine
- Two positions safety, with bolt stop
- Adjustable sights
- Polymer stock with soft-touch finish

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All these things go a long way to ensuring the Mauser will shoot straight. There's no reason to think this wouldn't be the most accurate magnum-size variant of the Model 98 because it is made with modern technology and techniques with the tightest tolerances of them all.

The modernity extends to the black finish on the metalwork, which is plasma-nitrided and blued to give a higher level of corrosion protection. The nitriding process also provides a much harder surface. It's a good looking finish, tending more matte than satin. The black is not a dark shade. The bolt body and its straight handle, by contrast, are polished.

The grade 5 Turkish walnut of the stock is beautiful. Mauser stains it darker than its original tone and applies a matte oiled finish. The elegant figure in the walnut comes out clearly. The black forend tip sets it off well, as does the choice of a black recoil pad.

The fit of the stock to the action is flawless.

It was a privilege to carry the Master for a few days as I hunted, and I kept pausing to admire its details and the enduring purity of Paul Mauser's 125-year-old design. I'll probably never find out if the novelty would wear off in time. I certainly didn't find out what it's like to use the Mauser on dangerous game in the African bush, nor even manage buffalo or scrub bulls here. But I did my best to capture a hint of how the big rifle might perform.

The heart of the M98 Magnum is the bigger double square-bridge receiver mated with the distinctive Model 98 bolt

"You can remove the scope in seconds to use the open sights"

Stalking fallow in the rut (see the story of the hunt in the September issue), I set myself the task of getting as close as possible. The successful shot was taken quickly and under pressure, well within 50m. With seconds to act, I brought the Mauser to my shoulder, found my eye immediately behind the crosshair, took aim and touched the trigger.

The buck dropped dead on the spot, felled by a bullet that went exactly where I'd intended it to.

In the end, that's what's really counts: the Mauser M98 Magnum performs brilliantly. You shouldn't expect anything less but you never quite know until you've proved it. Mauser has worked with all that history, craftsmanship, quality and beauty, retaining the tradition and reputation it has earned, and put it into a superbly engineered and dependable hunting rifle.

It might cost a premium but you get it all.

ABOVE: Front scope mount turns in to the purpose-designed housing in the receiver's forward ring

ABOVE: Straight and supportive butt with long length of pull helps make the Magnum pleasant to shoot

Benelli

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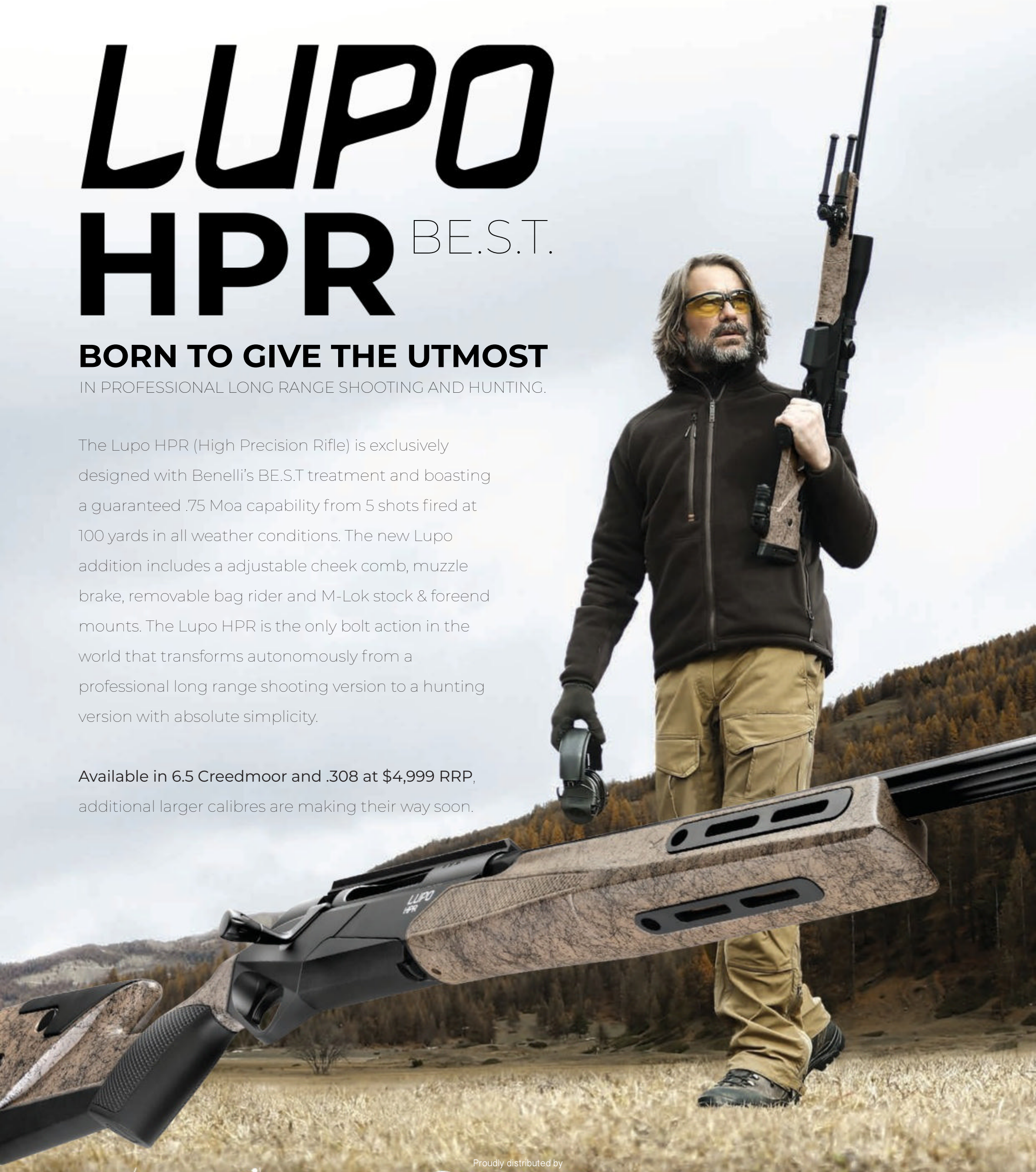

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BY NICK HARVEY

Delta Optics 9x45HD-RF rangefinding binocular

The Delta 9x45mm binocular offers spectacular optical performance and ranging ability

1

AS a hunter I consider a high-quality binocular to be second in importance only to my rifle. I can't imagine hunting any kind of big game animal without it. It's even better if you have a binocular that will measure the range for you.

Combining binocular with rangefinder saves time by instantly ranging a game animal seconds after you spot it. One of the latest range-finding binoculars is the Delta 9x45mm Titanium HD-RF. This is the first Delta optic I have reviewed and it's surprisingly good.

The Delta Optics Technologies company, founded in 2002, is based in Singapore. I believe this top-of-the-range Delta optic was designed in Poland and made in Japan, a country whose quality hunting optics rival the best European brands at considerably lower cost.

The Delta binocular is built using a traditional centre-bridge design rather than the open-type bridge some others use. It has a titanium frame, weighs a solid 1kg and measures 154mm long, 127mm wide and 68mm high, which provides viewing steadiness.

The barrels are covered in rubber armour and the gripping surfaces have a textured finish providing a firm grip. Rubber armouring not only protects the binocular but muffles the sound of it banging against rifle or rocks if you allow it to swing about during a climb.

> "Contrast, sharpness and light transmission are shockingly good"

Each ocular eyepiece winds out and includes a dioptric adjustment ring; the left one corrects individual vision while the right focuses an illuminated red OLED display with five levels of brightness. The adjustment rings have the same textured rubber surface as the grasping area. The eyecups are rubber coated and click adjustable for use with and without eyeglasses.

The centre focusing knob is rather large and chequered, making it easy to turn with the finger tips to refine the focus while viewing. This knob houses the single CR2 battery that powers the Class One laser rangefinder.

The laser projecting device is contained in one barrel of the binocular. Two rubber switches control the programming and operation. These switches are located in front of the focus knob, one on either side of the centre hinge; the menu switch is on the right side and the main/OK switch is on the left.

Specifications tout the Delta as capable of reading at distances from 13.5m to 2377m. Accuracy is ±1 metre at 1000m and ±2 metres from 1000 to 2377m. Distance measurements can be displayed in metres or yards.

The Delta does not have any kind of a ballistic compensation calculator. However, it does have an internal inclinometer and will display the user's choice of shot angle (vertical or horizontal) to ±70 degrees or the true horizontal distance.

Operation is simple: Press the operation button to activate the rangefinder, push the button again to range, or

hold it down for scan mode, which produces a new readout every 0.25 seconds and feeds back a running commentary on moving or very small targets. Inclement conditions such as rain, fog, snow and haze affect the unit's capabilities. The aiming circle blinks when the unit is unable to provide a range.

I was amazed by the Delta's crystal clear optics, which are equal to almost any binocular I've ever tested. Contrast, sharpness and light transmission are shockingly good. Lenses are made of unsurpassable fluoride glass and are fully multi-coated for contrast, light transfer, reflection reduction and every other performance-enhancing element conceivable to engineer into a binocular.

A phase-corrected, high index BAK-4 prism is combined with HD glass to get the maximum or optimum contrast of images viewed, increase colour transmission and minimise colour fringing.

The size of a binocular's exit pupils is also important to the hunter — the larger they are, the less critical is eye alignment. The pupil of the human eye varies in diameter in response to the intensity of the light it is metering, from approximately 2.5mm in bright sunlight to a maximum of around 7mm in total darkness. Based on my experience, a binocular used for hunting should not have an exit pupil smaller than 3mm, but I'd rather have 5mm.

The twilight factor (TF), a measure of resolution in marginal light, is the square root of the magnification multiplied by objective lens diameter. The Delta 9x45 has a TF of 18.3 and an exit pupil of 5mm which is enough to brighten the target image in dim light.

A binocular's field of view is influenced by several design factors including magnification, but for a given magnification, the larger the diameter of the ocular lenses, the greater the field of view. The Delta's ocular lenses have a diameter of 19mm with an eye relief of 18mm. The field of view is 117m at 1000m, which means its field of view at 500, 100 and 50m is 58.5, 12 and 6m respectively.

To test the unit for ranging ability, I sat on a lookout on one side of a steep gorge and pushed the rangefinder as far as I could reliably get readings. Even when ranging into a lowering sun — a challenging test for a laser rangefinder — I was able to push the maximum factory-specified distance. On rocky bluffs on the farthest gorge, the Delta (rated 2377m) consistently produced range readings out to 3200m. It goes without saying, however, that you must hold it rock steady.

The Delta is fast, taking only .25 of a second for the computer to respond to a range. Evidently, it has a very fast, powerful ranging apparatus and processor — typically, the distance appeared almost instantly every time I pressed the button. For all practical hunting purposes, it surpasses what any hunter will ever need for taking ethical shots at game.

In early evening, while good light remained, I scanned distant bluffs away up the Turon and nearby boundary fence lines searching for distortion. I couldn't detect any. Next I compared natural colours along the slopes and gullies — the green of fresh grass and river oaks, as well as browns and greys of brush. All were sharp and clear.

The Delta feels great in the hand and its laser switches are easy to manipulate. The readout is clear and sharp and its optical performance all that anyone could wish for. Better still, the price is affordable by the majority of hunters and shooters.

A bit on the heavy side and built with older-type centre-bridge construction, the Delta binocular is nonetheless outstanding.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Delta optics use top quality HD fluoride glass to eliminate secondary chromatic aberration and a proprietary anti-reflective coating that allows 85 percent light transmission.

2 The Delta 9x45 HD comes with a hard case, carrying strap and eyepiece and objective lens covers.

3 The Delta rangefinding binocular features click-adjustable, rubberised eyecups for use with or without eyeglasses. Dual dioptric adjustment rings serve to separately focus overall view and the OLED display

2

3

SPECS

Manufacturer: Delta Optics Technology, Singapore

Magnification: 9x

Objective lens: 45mm

Exit pupil: 5mm

Exit pupil distance: 18mm

Field of view: 117m at 1000m

Weight: 1020g with battery

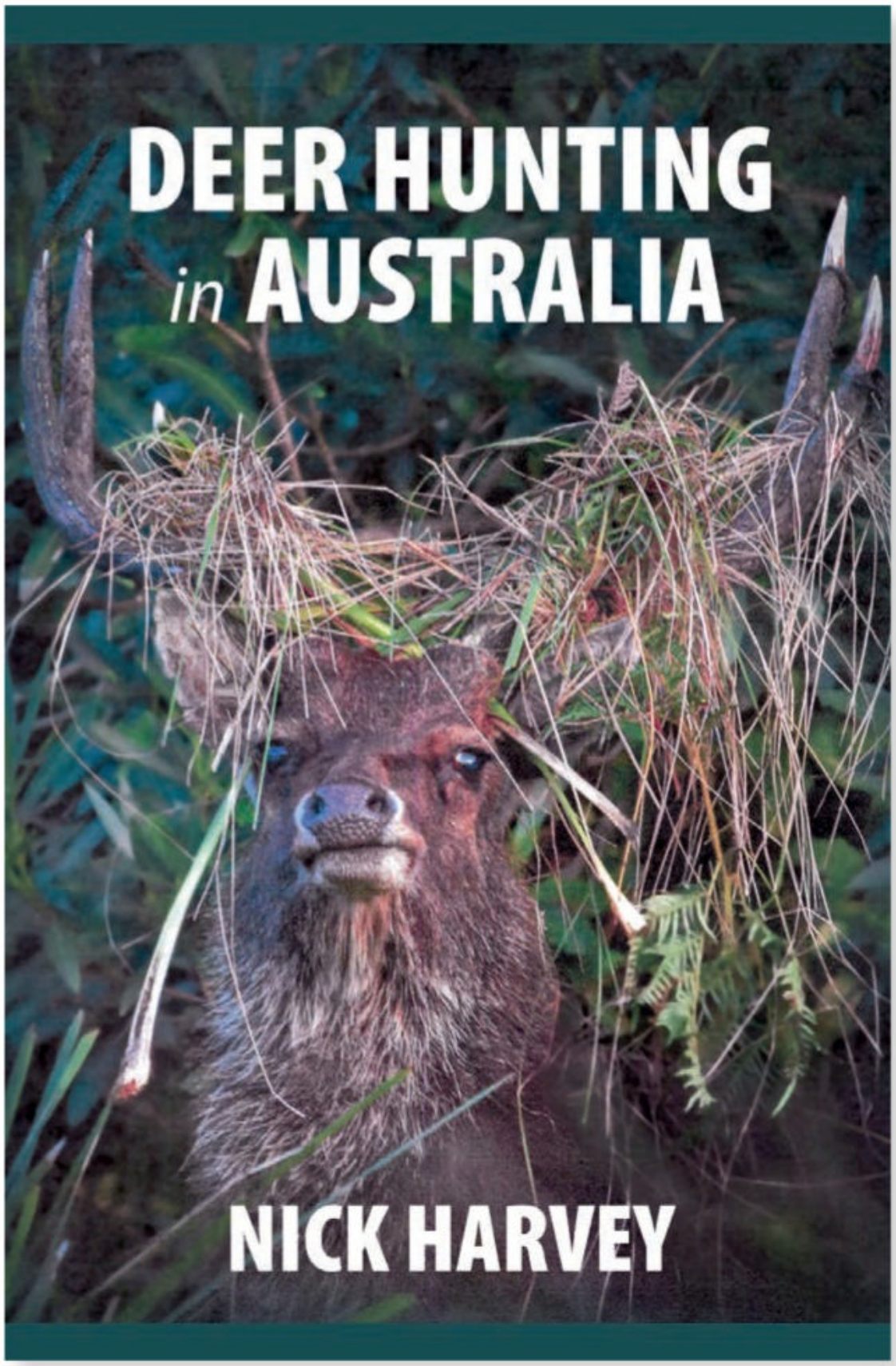
RRP: $1990

Distributor:
Australian Sporting Agencies, australiansportingagencies.com.au

BY MICK MATHESON

Deer hunting in Australia

Nick Harvey's new book covers deer hunting in detail



The cover of *Deer Hunting in Australia*, Nick's latest publication

NICK Harvey has produced a thorough and very detailed book covering every conceivable aspect of hunting deer in Australia. It is a 240-page volume that includes 16 pages of illustrations and photos and it discusses the gamut of topics from individual deer species through to correctly sighting in your deer rifle.

I learned plenty of new things reading the book. I doubt anyone, no matter how experienced, could avoid stumbling across new information and ideas between the covers of this work. It reflects Nick's decades of deer hunting as well as his research on the subject.

The first seven chapters cover the deer species living in Australia. And yes, you did read right: seven of them. Nick covers the little-known barasingha, a species that was released in Victoria in the 1800s. He believes he saw one in the 1970s but there are no recent reports of them at all. The question is, are they still out there?

The following seven chapters are full of tips that will help you fool, find and follow deer.

There are eight chapters covering equipment including, of course, rifles and cartridges.

The remainder of the book's 28 chapters cover cooking venison (with recipes), trophy preparation, the Douglas scoring system, a discussion of the damage excessive populations of deer can do and a straight-talking discourse on hunting as a dying art.

All the way through, Nick's conversational style is very readable and his anecdotes interesting. In some ways you learn as much about the man as about the deer. Best of all, Nick's extraordinary experience rubs off on you as you read the pages. Nick has a lot to give. I've read his words for several decades and worked with him for a couple of years, and every bit of wit or wisdom I get from him is another little nugget of gold.

Whether you're starting out as a deer hunter or have been doing it your whole life, *Deer Hunting in Australia* is an essential read.

Deer Hunting in Australia

Author: Nick Harvey
ISBN: 978-0-646-88183-6
Publisher: McPherson's Printing Group, Victoria
Distributor: Herron Security and Sport
234 x 153mm
240 pages
Available from gun shops

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ACCURATE – AFFORDABLE – AUSTRALIAN

BY DYLAN SMITH

Dylan with the old buck at his rutting stand

Creatures of habit

Dylan runs into a buck that has been around a while

BACK in the April issue I was reflecting on the life of deer, and a single buck in particular. If you spend enough time in the bush and pay attention through various means, it's highly likely you'll start to recognise individuals. Animals have a way of being predictable and unpredictable at the same time and the more I think I've figured them out, the more I realise I need to learn.

We all know that the fallow rut is its own thing when it comes to buck behaviour. You only have a window of several weeks to keep tabs on a buck before he disappears again and lives out the rest of his year in relative solitude until he drops his antlers, mobs up with his buddies and starts growing them again.

I've become good at placing trail cameras in effective positions so they can be my eyes when I'm not in the bush. I split my time between monitoring new spots while staying familiar with my regular haunts.

I pulled up at a camp spot in the middle of April just after lunch and, to my surprise, heard a buck croaking in a creek valley. I knew exactly where he would be as there has been a rut stand there the past several years. I dashed to the edge of the scrub, glassed him and realised he would be a good head to cull.

After getting in to less than 200m and waiting for him to present a nice shot, it was all over.

Once I laid my hands on him, I realised he was a much older buck than I first thought, with his coronets right down on the top of his skull and scars all over him from years of brawling. Interestingly, when I reflected on this my mind went back 12 months to when my dad and I watched a huge buck fight on this very hill. In my April column I talked more about the bigger buck in that fight. I had many trail camera pictures of him and dad and I were perplexed at the time with how a seemingly smaller headed buck had the confidence to take on the older one. As it turns out, he was a very mature buck, despite his ordinary genetics.

> "I realised he was a much older buck than I first thought"

It was a beautiful moment for me as I was able to sit next to the buck and contemplate how much heart he showed in that fight, and what the last 12 months of his life involved. This was even more so when I got home and looked over pictures of him from 2022.

Sometimes paths connect in ways you would least expect while out bush.

Until next time, enjoy living your wilderlife.

Follow Dylan on Instagram at '_wilderlife_'

This is the same buck, on the right, during a fight last year

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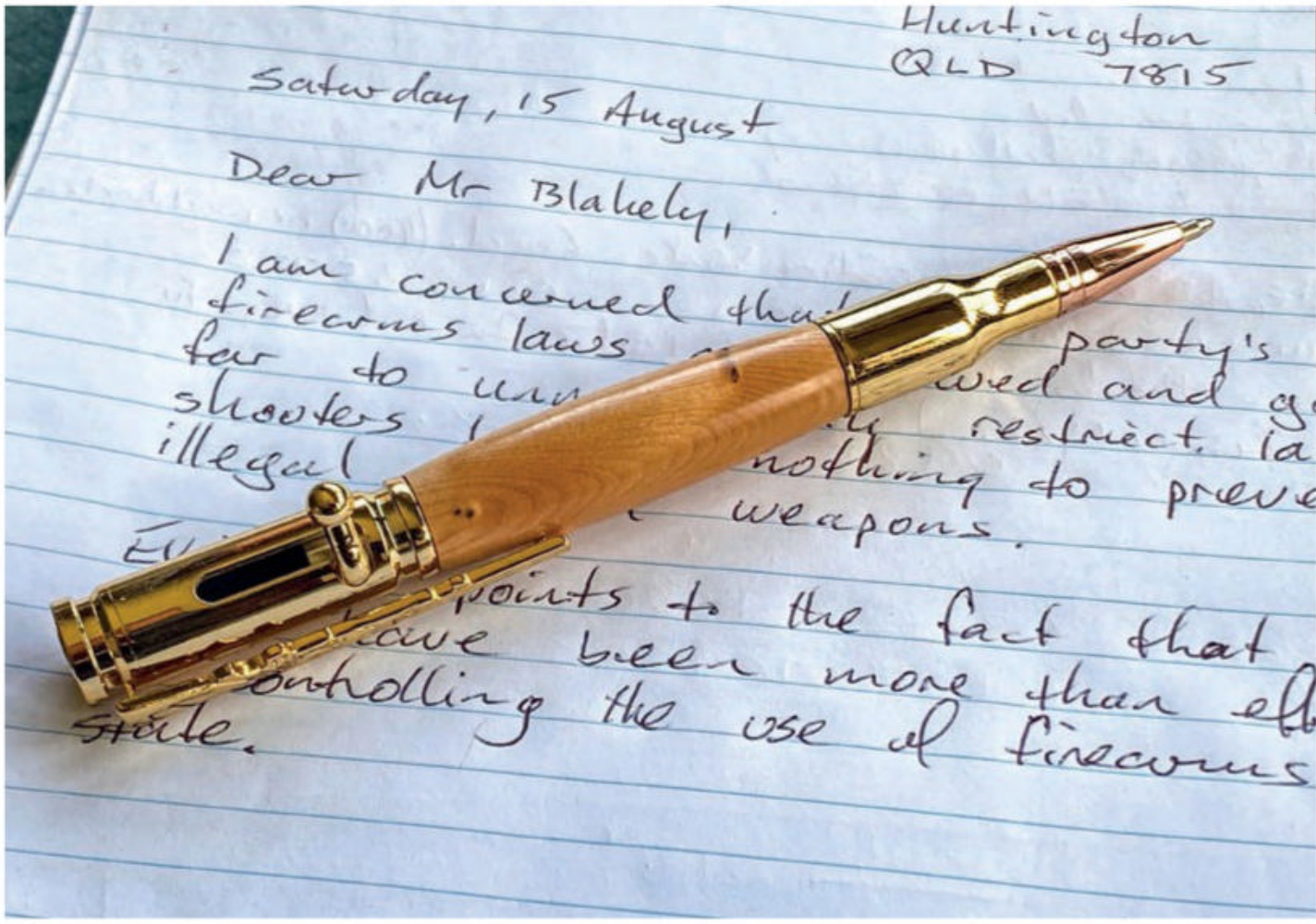
BY GRAHAM PARK, SHOOTERS UNION



A personal touch

Talk or write directly to your local MP if you want the right result

YOU may have heard that we recently uncovered a plan by factions within the Queensland Labor Party to secretly add further restrictions to shooters in the state. The plans, which were leaked to us via government employees involved in what was happening, were apparently being developed in an effort to shore up sliding poll numbers for the ALP, who are aware the Palaszczuk Government is struggling in the lead-up to the 2024 state election.

It's not a surprise that one of the top options on the list to do something about it was "punish law-abiding firearms users". We've seen it before and we'll see it again.

MAIN: It doesn't have to be written by hand, but a personally worded letter or email to your local MP has a far better impact than a form letter

We know the plans were still in a preliminary stage. No task groups had been formed, no committees had it on their agenda. However, it was being discussed and action needed to be taken quickly to expose it and put a stop to it.

We asked our members to contact their MPs and they did — en masse, because they were as outraged about this secret plan as we were.

What was important was that it wasn't just people sending a generic email; every contact was unique, individual and personal from an identifiable voter, in their electorate, who was deeply concerned over the matter.

Our media director is very much of the view that form or template letters simply don't work. Politicians (and their staffers) know how little effort they require and tend to just bin them, maybe after replying with a generic template response.

Individual letters or emails, phone calls or, even better, visits mean MPs know there is a real voter who genuinely cares about the issue. Anyone can forward a form letter they've taken 10 seconds to add their name to, but fewer people take the time to write something themselves.

State MPs across the political spectrum — not only ALP, but LNP, KAP and PHON — told us they had received unprecedented numbers of emails, phone calls and appointments from shooters in their electorates to discuss the issue. One MP told us they received more than 150 emails from shooters about it.

There's an old saying that the squeaky wheel gets the oil, and in a political sense that means that the people talking directly to their MPs about issues are more likely to get positive outcomes.

> "MPs received unprecedented numbers of emails, phone calls and appointments from shooters"

Remember: MPs want to be re-elected and the only way that can happen is by them listening to their constituents. And to listen to their constituents, they need their constituents to contact them and let them know what issues matter — and critically, what issues will impact the constituent's vote come polling day.

Our government sources have told us that the chatter around planned restrictions has died off for now, largely as a result of the attention we and our members have brought to the issue, but we need to remain vigilant. Like rust, the antis never sleep and are constantly looking for ways to hurt us as shooters.

This is a good opportunity to start developing a communication line with your local MP. Let them know you're a law-abiding, upstanding, reasonable citizen who is genuinely concerned about the way shooters are treated. Remind them that their attitude towards firearms owners directly affects how you will vote.

The message is simple: "I have a gun licence and I vote. I won't vote for you if you make things worse for me as a shooter."

Graham Park is the president of Shooters Union Australia.

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WINNER

Andrew Elliot hunted this good red stag in the last roar. "It took three days to get him and the lantana was dreadful, but it makes for a good memory," he says. "It was a great hunt."

"I went to a mate's place to get some venison for an upcoming meeting," explains David "Barney" Wyatt. "He had been having trouble with pigs and had trapped 20 and shot a couple more in previous weeks. We secured a couple of chital spikers, and while retrieving them came across this large hog. He had his head down and was digging. The hole he had dug was around 30cm deep and it wasn't the only hole around. Dan nailed it. He weighed 92.55kg. Both ears had been torn and he had other scars across his head and shoulders. A scrapper."

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Bill Lemon got a call from his mate, Wayne. "He had seen a boar hanging around the grain shed and asked if I could come out and deal with it," Bill says. "The .243 with thermal vision and Fiocchi 100-grainers made short work of it."

Ally Glasby had just finished getting the cattle into the yards. "Before marking a few calves, I thought I would go for a walk to a kangaroo carcass that the wild dogs had killed a couple of afternoons before," she says. "With the wind in my face, I approached cautiously to find this female having a feed. No match for the Fiocchi .223."

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SUB-MOA

ENTRIES: please send your **high resolution .jpg or .png image** as an attachment to your email addressed to **mickmatheson@yaffa.com.au** – all images must be at least 1MB in size. For entry to be valid the following contact details must be included: **First name, surname, full mail address, contact phone number** and **email address**.

PLEASE NOTE: this competition is not a game of chance. To achieve entry, photos must be submitted to the satisfaction of the Sporting Shooter editorial team. All entrants must be over 18 years of age and need to be suitably licensed as per individual state firearm regulations and requirements. The firearms will be issued to winners through licensed firearm dealers upon sighting a permit to purchase. Firearm industry staff, paid shooting publication contributors and staff are not eligible to enter this competition. For full terms and conditions please visit sportingshooter.com.au/wfphotocomp

THREE MONTHLY RUNNERS UP WILL WIN A CAP AND STUBBY HOLDER!

A true razorback, bristles and all, but not a match for a 7mm Weatherby

The Tonner

The big razorbacks are out there. Graham Duncan got a ripper!

WE were hunting out west of Bourke, NSW, in June when I shot this monster boar — a true razorback.

I was using my Weatherby Mark V in 7mm Weatherby Magnum, which is loaded with 120gn OEP projectiles. Since buying it a few years ago, it has become my main pig gun.

When we spotted the boar he was a fair distance away and already making his getaway so there wasn't any time to line up a careful shot. Aiming offhand, I gave him a lead and touched the shot off.

He went down!

We were absolutely awe inspired when we got to him as he was about twice as big as we first thought. He was so big two strong men couldn't lift him. We had to drag him into position to get good photos.

This pig sported massive shoulders and was a great razorback. His legs at the ankles were about three inches thick! It goes to show the big ones are still around. You just need to keep hunting them.

ABOVE: Graham's Weatherby Mark V is a thing of beauty

After getting the photos, we measured the distance of the shot. It was 205 metres for a one-shot kill.

I turned 67 the other day and I'm not stopping hunting until I can't carry on another yard.

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The rifleman's rifle

The legendary Winchester Model 70, the finest commercial rifle made in the US, has become an all-time great and is still going strong

1

THE Model 70 story begins with Winchester's first entry into the modern, high-power bolt-action field, the Model 54, which was manufactured from 1925 through 1936. It was a good, strong rifle that gained a lot of followers.

The Big Red W had served its apprenticeship manufacturing Pattern 14 and Model 1917 Enfield rifles for British and American troops during World War 1. The Model 54 included features of the 1903 Springfield which had, in turn, been copied from the Mauser Model 98 and cost the American government millions for patent infringements.

Features included a coned breech, dual-opposed locking lugs, a broad non-rotating claw extractor and one-piece firing pin. The receivers were milled from a solid piece of forged nickel steel and the bolt was a one-piece forging with integral handle. Little has changed. Today, Model 70 receivers are still made the same way but are cut on a CNC machine to the correct dimensions.

By the 1930s, after analysing and working out the strengths and weaknesses of the Model 54, Winchester set out to improve on its shortcomings and designed the Model 70.

Production versions of the

Model 70 began to be distributed in 1935, although the model wasn't officially announced until late 1936. Despite this inauspicious beginning, sales of Winchester's new high-power bolt-action took off like a house on fire.

The Model 70 retained the 54's most worthwhile features including the very handsome and efficient basic receiver pattern, the claw extractor and controlled-round feeding, but added a separate bolt stop in the left rear of the receiver's bridge. The bolt stop, a serrated button, is pressed for bolt removal.

This separate bolt-stop system was a real improvement over the Model 54. Not only was the sear relieved of this function, but the unobtrusive button did away with the clumsy, externally mounted, boxlike unit endemic to military bolt actions.

About the only problem with the receiver was chipping of the stock where the clover-leaf shaped tang was inletted. In 1947, the tang was restyled to have an overhanging outer edge which sits entirely on top of the stock, thus eliminating any need for close inletting.

Early Model 70s had a safety mounted on top of the bolt sleeve, copying the Mauser 98, but it soon got in the way of a low-mounted scope. Winchester solved the problem by relocating the safety to pivot on an offset vertical axis for easier operation under a scope. When the tab is pulled to the rear, the safety is engaged to lock the bolt handle down and block the firing pin. In the middle position, the firing pin remains blocked, but the bolt handle can be lifted to safely remove a loaded round from the chamber. The forward position releases the safety and puts the rifle in firing mode.

The Model 70 retained the Springfield breech. The coned barrel, massive non-rotary extractor, receiver-mounted ejector and partial bolt-face rim all form a system tailored to feed, extract and eject cartridges with the utmost speed and certainty.

2

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Chambered in .30-06 Ackley Improved, this Model 70 has a very futuristic Super Shadow stock with dot-textured forend and pistol grip

2 Classic Model 70 bolt has non-rotating claw-type extractor, and its gas flange setup is the same as on the pre-64

3 Controlled round feeding system slides cartridge free from magazine and captures it, holding it firmly all the way into the chamber

> **"The pre-64 Model 70 was not perfect"**

The blade ejector is fixed, being mounted to the receiver, and slides through a slot cut in the bolt face. The pre-1964 bolt has an integral guide lug on the left side of its body for reducing wobble as it travels in the receiver. Serving the same purpose as a guide lug on its bolt body, a groove in the bottom of the right locking lug engages a matching rib in the receiver rail. In both design and operation it is identical to the anti-bind feature shared by all Model 70s built since 1968.

From a practical standpoint, there has never been a better system. Trying to prove the cone breech is unsound from a cartridge-head support standpoint is pointless. It has proven to be adequate through almost nine decades of use.

The original Model 70 trigger with its breakaway or override action was a big improvement over the Model 54. Machined from solid steel, there was nothing to go wrong. It is a simple, foolproof design with no small screws to vibrate loose and become dangerous. It is adjustable for weight of pull and over-travel and gives a crisp, clean let-off.

In 2008, when Winchester reintroduced the classic pre-1964 Model 70 rifle, they also gave it a new MOA Trigger System which includes a trigger-piece, actuator and sear coated in Winchester's proprietary SlickShot and a mix of electroless nickel and Teflon for smooth operation and corrosion resistance.

Encased in a solid steel housing it works on a simple pivoting-lever principle and has two external adjustment screws. Designed with a 2:1 mechanical advantage, it has zero take-up, zero creep and zero over-travel. Pull weight is user-adjustable from 3-5lb (1.4-2.3kg). It is essentially the Feather Trigger of the Browning X-Bolt modified to fit the Model 70 receiver.

A new steel trigger guard and hinged floorplate replaced the heavy steel strap used for the Model 54's trigger guard and floorplate. The new bottom metal was gracefully sculptured and pleasing to the eye. The floorplate allowed easy unloading via a plunger mounted in front of the trigger guard.

I never cared for it, however, because instead of a one-piece arrangement like the Mauser and Springfield, it was made in two separate pieces. The floorplate is hinged to a small plate under the front guard screw, and a separate guard bow is flanged for the middle and rear guard screws. The catch is a small, angled plunger in the front web of the trigger guard. Most shooters rejoiced when the new Classic model appeared with a one-piece unit.

The Model 70 bolt is a one-piece chrome-moly steel forging and the handle has a 45-degree angle instead of being straight out as in the Model 54. It sweeps gracefully rearward, ending in a tear-shaped knob for a practical blend of grace and utility.

In addition to smooth feeding, the controlled-round action offers some other real advantages. The claw extractor

3

LEFT: The Model 70 with Kahles 3.5-10x50 scope makes an excellent hunting rig for shots both near and far

is strong and has enough power to withdraw a sticky case, something most rotating extractors lack. Model 70 extractors are made of steel; they rarely break. They snap over the rim of a cartridge dropped into the chamber when the bolt is closed, something most Mauser 98s won't do unless the claw has been modified.

On the pre-64 and new Classic Model 70, the Mauser-type claw extractor on the right and a combination gas-deflection flange and bolt-stop extension on the left share a common collar that encircles and rotates around the bolt body.

The pre-64 Model 70 was not perfect, since it had a rather poor gas handling system in the event a case ruptures. A hole was drilled in the right side of the receiver ring to vent gas away from a right-handed shooter's face. But gas entering the firing pin hole was released by two ports in the bolt head that directed gases down the left lug raceway, straight back toward the shooter, just like late-version Model 54s did. Not a good idea since the bolt sleeve has no flange to deflect gas away from the shooter's face.

The gas system in the later Model 70 was improved by having two large holes in the underside of the bolt body which divert gases downward into the magazine well. The firing pin driven to the rear by gas release is stopped about 8mm past full-cock when the mainspring goes solid.

"The post-64 push-feed model was anathema to the traditional rifleman"

The dimensional uniformity of barrels on the current Model 70s is far superior to old pre-64 barrels I have examined and the bores are much smoother. As well, the chambers have dimensions on the minimum side of SAAMI specifications, which not only offers improved accuracy but usually results in longer case life for the handloader.

The Model 70 action has undergone many changes over its 88 years of existence, but few shooters care to remember the post-64 push-feed model which surfaced in 1963 and was anathema to the traditional rifleman.

Every gunmaker has good times and bad times and Winchester Repeating Arms Company was no exception. During the 1960s, Winchester was faced with ever-increasing competition and a considerable rise in costs. It made the mistake of attempting to replace an American institution with a new rifle, also designated the Model 70, which had a push-feed action and poor cosmetics. Winchester tried unsuccessfully to brainwash shooters into believing it was an improvement on the original action.

The post-64 Model 70 probably wasn't as bad as most shooters claimed it was. I had one in .375 H&H re-chambered to .375 Weatherby Magnum that was consistently accurate and planted five shots into 1½" at 200yd. However, most shooters shunned it for not being a genuine Model 70.

A third 'improved' version of the pseudo Model 70, the post-68 model, offered a number of improvements — a new stainless steel follower, a steel floorplate and a new anti-bind device for smoother bolt travel. The latter consisted of a groove milled into the righthand locking lug that mated with the right receiver rail. But it was all for naught. Winchester had made an error when they attempted to replace an American tradition with an imposter and would pay dearly for its mistake.

At the time Winchester Repeating Arms was owned by Olin Corporation, but in 1981 Olin sold its gunmaking operation to US Repeating Arms Company (USRAC), which was set up to manufacture the Model 70 under license from Olin. However, around 1987, the great Fabrique Nationale (FN) of Belgium, owner of Browning Arms, purchased 48 percent of USRAC and three years later bought out the remaining shareholders.

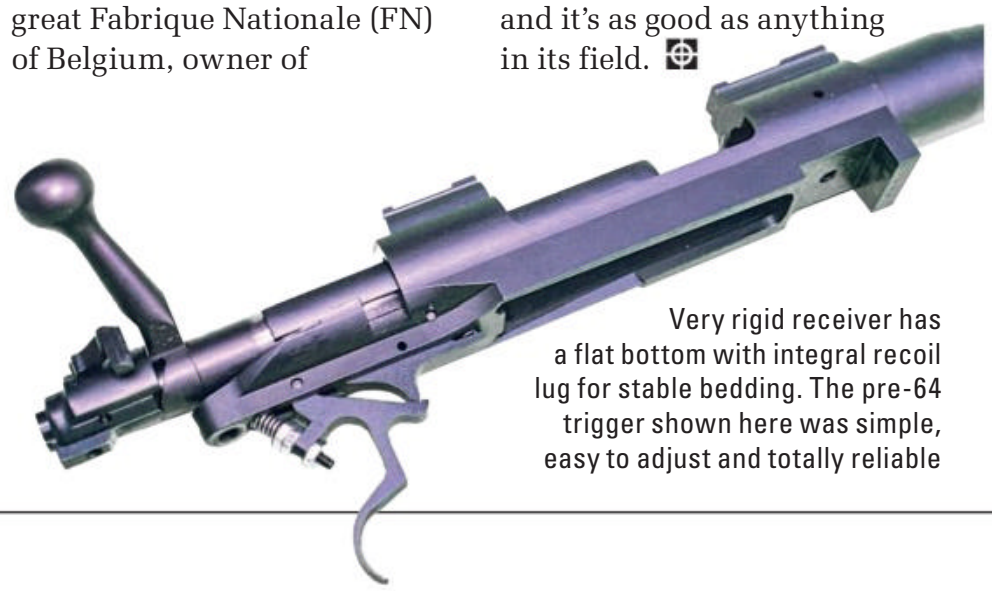
FN, one of the largest firearms manufacturers in the world, then set out to upgrade the Winchester line, including the Model 70, using up-to-date technology — computers and CNC machinery. This cut costs and made possible a partial return to the pre-64 controlled-round feed design with claw extractor. This post-93 action was actually a combination of old and new Model 70 features.

The new action got such an enthusiastic reception that it soon took precedence and the post-68 action was preserved for cheaper models.

Then in 2008 FN reintroduced a full line of Classic Model 70s including the Super Grade, a handsome, totally modern, entirely classic and detailed rifle, manufactured in South Carolina. The bottom metal is all one-piece steel and includes a hinged floorplate with the release in the top front of the trigger guard.

The new Classic Model 70 is far superior to any production-grade Model 70 previously built by Olin Winchester or USRAC. If you were to compare a current action with the original you'd find closer tolerances throughout, making everything a neater fit.

Everyone knew the Model 70 was too good a rifle to fade into obscurity. In terms of longevity, fine design, quality materials and manufacturing excellence the Classic Model 70, in its latest iteration, is more than ever the "Rifleman's Rifle" and it's as good as anything in its field.



Very rigid receiver has a flat bottom with integral recoil lug for stable bedding. The pre-64 trigger shown here was simple, easy to adjust and totally reliable

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300 WSM	150	3260 fps
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The slam!

Jared Matthews completes his grand slam with an outstanding rusa trophy

RUSA AREN'T the deer most people find themselves waiting to hunt to secure a trophy and to finalise their grand slam of taking all six Australian deer species. In my case, though, they have beaten me time and time again.

MAIN: The slam completed — and what a way to do it!

ABOVE: A stag rises from his bed

GOOD friends have given me opportunities but the stars never aligned. One instance was when I had a friend call up to tell me he had a massive stag on his property. I raced four hours to his place the next morning to find the stag but it had cast his antlers in between our phone call and me arriving.

Other friends had offered opportunities along the way but it hadn't worked out. There was also a part of me that really wanted to complete this on my own terms, so I probably knocked back opportunities that would have guaranteed I'd secure my last deer species in Australia.

In 2021 things took a turn for the better when two very good men, Wayne Hogan and Martin Thann, put me in touch with a gentleman by the name of Shane on the North Coast of NSW. All looked right for a hunt on his property. However, with COVID in the mix I had no contact and from what I could work out it had fallen by the wayside. It turned out he called me soon after this trip and told me to come up! But that's another story for another article.

After discussing this with my very generous good friend Harry Stenton of True Wild Outfitters in the NT, he offered up his access in North Queensland. By this stage, after so many failed attempts, I wasn't getting too excited until I was there looking at the deer.

1

"I had this feeling I couldn't shake. There was just so much unknown"

2

Fast forward to the start of March 2022. Harry called.

"Here are the details mate," he said. "The station owner is expecting a call from you."

Sure enough, after a chat with the owner we were locked in for June.

I asked Aaron Stahl along for the trip. He had hunted rusa before but also had not been lucky enough to take a nice trophy on those occasions. We saddled up for the 20-hour drive. I was excited — as was Aaron — but I had this feeling I couldn't shake. I kept apologising to Aaron, saying I hoped there would be deer here. Harry had only visited once and it wasn't this time of year. There was just so much unknown.

We arrived just after lunch and met the station owner, a very pleasant fella who gave us a warm welcome and made us feel at home. He said he hadn't seen much about but it didn't take us long to pick up a few deer moving through the dry creek bed. We set ourselves up in

the workers' quarters and got our hunting kit together.

Aaron and I came up with a little bit of a hunt plan: get out really wide to cover ground and get the wind right, then cut into the depression that we had seen a few hinds heading into. I had told Az I was happy with anything 30 inches and above so if we saw something in that range I would most likely take it.

He said we should probably have a good look around first before we shot anything and I agreed.

We snuck in and could see a lot of deer and a few stags. I think at the same point we saw a good stag that needed closer inspection. We snuck in further but about 80 cows spotted us and started walking in. They got to 50 metres then bolted.

We were sure this would ruin our stalk. The deer were on high alert but eventually settled back down. We looked for a while at this magnificent stag and I turned to Az.

"Mate, I think I'm going to take him," I said. "If I don't and we don't see him again I will never forgive myself. It's more than I have ever dreamed of."

I began the stalk on my stomach. It took about 20 minutes to get to a position from which I could see the deer again but I couldn't work out where the stag was. From this angle everything looked completely different.

After a good 15 minutes I saw where he was — he had bedded down and completely blended in to the trees. He stood from his bed and and I shouldered the rifle but he moved behind some cover before I could settle the crosshairs on him.

He was showing some rutting attitude and was following up what appeared to be a hot hind. He was making ground on me, and I had other deer just 40 metres from me. It was now or never.

I had him in the crosshairs for a fair while but there was a hind behind him, so I had to wait for her to move as I didn't want to wound her with the exiting projectile.

When the hind moved away and opened up the shot, I saw another hind moving quick in front of him. I had a small window so I took the shot, threading it between the

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Jared gets blown away by the size of his first rusa trophy

2 The herd was often on alert, especially after the cattle bolted

3 The stag moves through the herd, protected by hinds that were often in the firing zone, too

6

7

approaching deer. The job was done; he hit the deck instantly. The other deer didn't know what had happened as they looked around nervously.

I headed back to Az where my bag was and we celebrated and swapped stories of what it looked like from each angle. Az managed to get the whole lot on film, which I was stoked about. We headed in to the stag, pushing a fair few deer away along with a couple of nice stags.

I was worried my stag would get a case of ground shrinkage, but I was not at all disappointed. I wouldn't normally put a tape on a deer in the field as that's not what it's all about for me, but with Az and I not overly experienced with measuring rusa antlers while on the hoof, curiosity got the better of me.

He measured 35 inches long, which absolutely blew us away! I could not have dreamt of shooting something of this quality for my first rusa stag.

> **"The stag had bedded down and completely blended in to the trees"**

After a photo shoot, caping and butchering we headed back to the homestead. I set about face-caping late into the night and we put away a fair few cold rums in celebration.

The next morning, we headed out to find Az a stag. The mornings were a bit fresh and a nice fog had set in. The smell of a crisp morning in that red dirt country is something only those who have experienced it will be able to understand. It was a perfect morning.

We travelled along the creek finding plenty of fresh rubs and sign but not many deer. As the morning warmed up, we headed in through a little patch of saplings where we found a few deer.

After pushing into an opening we came across a few deer bedded up and spotted a nice stag. We could only imagine he was around 30 inches in length. After having a good look Az gave me the nod; that deer would satisfy his needs. We came up with a game plan.

The stag was bedded, so we crawled in as close as we could — probably about 80 metres. There was a spiker between us that would alert the whole party had we stood up. We sat there for about 45 minutes along with a million flies, not being able to move too much. This was wearing pretty thin. But finally, the spiker stood and faced away from us, which allowed Az to set up and take the shot on the bedded stag.

Once again, the target stag didn't move and was out instantly.

Now it was time to celebrate. We had achieved exactly what we set out to do and you couldn't wipe the smile off our faces. Walking to Az's stag, we found a whole bunch of cast antlers which showed this was obviously a common spot the deer visit.

You can only imagine the night we had. I got to sit there and watch Az swat flies away while trying to cape his stag as I drank ice-cold rums. We lit the fire and had a great night with the station owner and his son.

The next day we put a heap of miles under foot exploring the property — a beautiful part of the world I will be forever grateful for the opportunity in exploring. A massive thank you to Az and Harry for helping me close the chapter completing the slam! Good hunting!

ON THIS PAGE

6 The area was full of cast antlers

7 Alert but not yet spooked, rusa stags check for danger

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RED DEER HUNTING

Family traditions

Mickey Gubas inherited his love of hunting from his father, and now it's time to pass it on

ONE OF MY earliest memories was when I was five years old. My father was loading his two German shorthair pointers into the front boot of his VW beetle to go hunting. This was in the former Yugoslavia, a country that no longer exists, but I'm sure the hunting traditions are still in place today. Over the years, I've heard many stories about how game is managed there and how hunting is regulated through licensing and club memberships.

1

ONE story that has stuck with me is about a red deer that my father shot and the process of distributing the meat to all the hunters in the field that day. Once the deer was butchered into the corresponding number of portions, the meat would be placed on a table with the successful hunter's back to the table. Another hunter would point at a portion of meat and the hunter with his back to the table would name the person who it was given to. This ritual would be repeated until each hunter had a share.

Traditions such as this must have evolved over many years so that everyone had a chance at an equal share, and disputes could be avoided about who got better cuts.

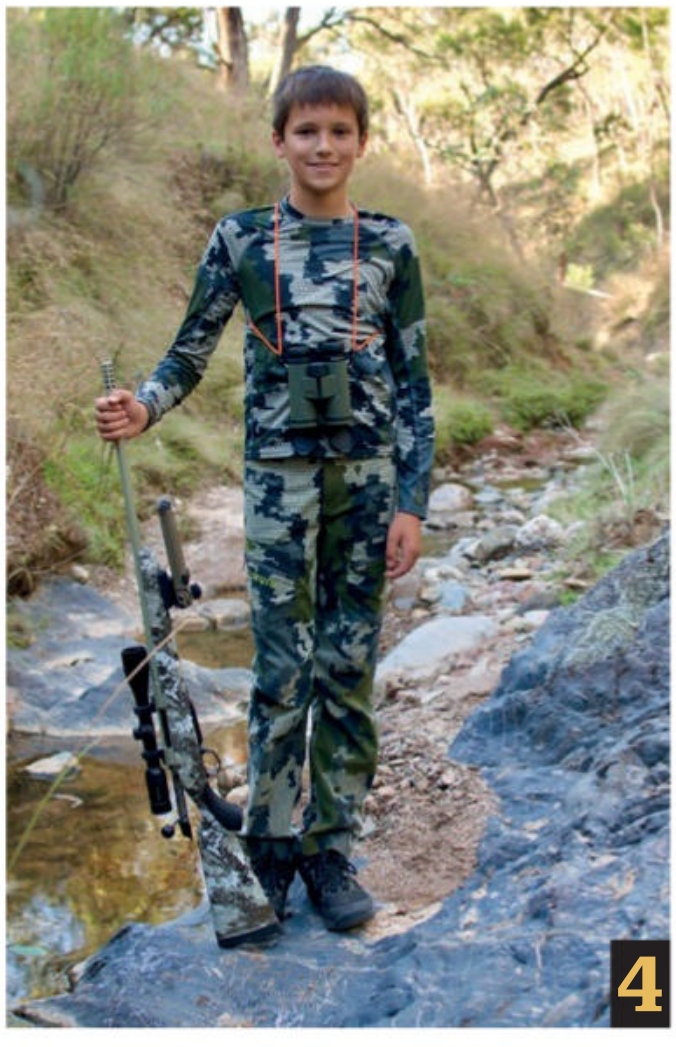
Upon emigrating to Australia and settling down, one of the first things my father bought was a Baikal over/under shotgun, which I still keep in my safe. The process in the 1970s, as described by him, was that he went to the local sports store, saw a Baikal shotgun that was familiar to him and then paid for it. The only licensing process was going to the police station about 300m up the road to get a permit on the spot and then walking back to collect the gun — a much less complicated time than today.

A few years later, when I was eight, I got my first air rifle and began a merciless campaign against the sparrows in the backyard plum tree. By the time I was 16 in the 1980s, I was riding my bike to nearby properties with my gun in a backpack, barrel pointing out the top, to hunt rabbits and foxes. That probably wouldn't be a great idea today.

This started my lifelong

"One of the first things my father bought was a Baikal shotgun, which I still keep in my safe"

2



ON THIS SPREAD

1 Leo and Mickey with the magnificent red stag, Leo's reward for a lot of hard work and good learning

2 A pair of good fallow bucks take off, but they weren't on the menu

3 Leo dropped this sow on another stalk

4 Leo is carrying on the family's hunting tradition

obsession with firearms, hunting and fishing. So, when my son, Leo, was born, I was determined to introduce him to the outdoors. I believe every person has a built-in pilot light within them to hunt; it just needs to be ignited. I've seen so many people get completely immersed in the hunt. Once they start, a primordial instinct takes over that no amount of soy decaf lattes can extinguish. It's in our DNA.

When Leo was five years old, I took him on a fallow deer hunt. I managed to get a deer and then began field dressing. It was then that I had a thought: maybe I'll end up having my worst nightmare, a vegan son, if Leo was horrified by the process. The complete opposite happened, though, and he couldn't wait to eat it. Big relief.

Once Leo started high school and got his minor's permit, I made a deal with him: if he got more than two As, I would organise a red deer hunt at Raptor Ridge, as he had already done quite a bit of target shooting and hunting. The only catch was that his grades would determine who would do the hunting. He would be either watching or hunting.

Leo couldn't believe his luck. After spending months studying, reading and writing countless essays, he finally achieved his goal and got four As in his first year of high school. And as promised, I rewarded him with a hunting trip to Raptor Ridge Lodge, one of the best hunting destinations in the country.

When we arrived, Leo's eyes widened with excitement. The lodge was nestled in the heart of a deer Xanadu, surrounded by hills and open valleys. It was the perfect place for a hunting trip.

We were greeted by Mark, the son of hosts Steve and Judy, and a friendly smile.

He welcomed us and showed us to our cabin, which was far better than I expected.

After settling in, Steve came in for a quick brief and organised a time to check Leo's rifle zero. Later that afternoon, we took a look around the property. Even though it was still quite warm, we came across numerous fallow deer, including some white ones I'd never seen before, as well as some goats, but we were after a red.

That night, we were both absolutely blown away by Steve's trophy room and Judy's cooking. Every trophy in that room had a story that Steve could remember to the smallest detail. To me, that room isn't about those trophies but rather the memories of adventures.

By hunting with someone of Steve's wisdom, you benefit from those years of experience hunting in every corner of the globe, which he generously passes on.

The next morning at daybreak, Steve, Leo and I headed out to different sections of the property to start the second phase of our red deer hunting adventure. Steve is an expert in tracking and hunting game, and we approached with the wind directly in our faces. He took us into another valley, where we spotted 12 red deer grazing on the edge of a clearing.

> **"I made a deal: if he got more than two As, I would organise a hunt"**

Leo's heart raced with excitement as he and Steve moved in for a stalk, getting within 180m of the deer. However, Leo couldn't get a clear shot at the stag we were aiming for. They decided to patiently rest in the shade of a tree for 90 minutes until, finally, Leo steadied his rifle and took aim.

With a loud crack, the bullet hit its mark and the deer was hit. But due to the sheer size of these Yugoslav/Hungarian red deer, which are about double that of a Scottish red, it didn't drop. Leo immediately followed up with a second shot. The red was on the ground.

Leo was ecstatic. He had bagged his trophy red deer, and it was a beautiful one, too. We took some photos and then set to work field-dressing the animal. One shot had destroyed its heart, and the second was a lung shot. Mark found one of the .308 Win projectiles while butchering, and I found the second one while I was cutting and vacuum-bagging the meat at home.

After we finished, we brought the deer back to the lodge, where Mark did an expert job caping and breaking it down. We had a rest in the middle of the day and were ready to go when Steve suggested an evening pig hunt, which Leo was more than eager to participate in.

After a short walk into a heavily wooded area, Steve signalled to stop: he'd spotted something. Leo moved in slowly to about 70m and was able to see the sow Steve had spotted. After about five minutes, he had a clear shot; the .308 was back in action, and I was getting the camera ready.

As we sat around Steve and Judy's dining table that night recounting our adventure, Leo said that he had learned a lot from our hunting trip — not just about hunting, but also about perseverance, patience and the rewards of hard work.

I smiled and patted him on the back.

"You earned this trip, Leo," I said. "I'm glad we could share this adventure together. Hopefully, you'll remember this trip when you're an old man with your own son."

That big head should keep the memory alive. I'm pretty sure he's the only kid at his school eating sandwiches of venison schnitzel that he shot himself.

ON THIS PAGE

5 Leo picked up an enormous amount of wisdom from his guide, Steve, who has more than 50 years of hunting experience

6 Spoiled for choice!

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Andrew Collis and the boys rack up a good tally of feral pigs

Winter safari

WHEN THE mid-year holidays come I'm always excited about a winter safari with my good mate Paul Ball of Bally's Safaris. This year marks our ninth annual catch-up out at one of our favourite properties out at Meandarra, Queensland.

MAIN: Another spectacular sunset in western Queensland

LEFT: Phoenix with one of the pigs he knocked over

ABOVE: Andrew bowled over this boar on one of the dams during an afternoon hunt

BOTH Phoenix and I were very excited to be heading out once again. While everyone is struggling with the temperatures, we knew that early each morning we would be out in zero-type temperatures scouting for pigs that might be rooting around on the 20,000-acre property we call our second home.

The six and a half hour roadtrip from Gladstone is always spectacular and the excitement builds as thoughts wander off about the adventures we might have on safari and knowing that we are helping local landowners rid their lands of feral animals.

Time went quick and it wasn't long until we were unloading our gear into the dongers and gearing up to head out and see where the pigs might be. With Bally and I in the ute, both Phoenix and Bally's mate John were on the back, scanning the fields for some serious pigs.

As luck would have it, we soon caught our first sighting of two young boars playing in the long grass in a field not 30 metres away from the laneway. John loaded up and shot, hitting one of the young boars as they both ran off through the long grass.

We all hopped out of the ute and through the fence in pursuit. The grass was so long it was very difficult to see anything. I managed to spot the second boar and fired my stainless 6.5x55 Swede, knocking him right over on the spot.

We had trouble locating the first boar that John had hit. Phoenix was able to find a light blood trail and followed it for about 30m until he came to a stop where the trail ended. Tall grass inhibited seeing anything.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Three fine rifles trying to stand tall above the frustrating grass

2 Andrew had as much fun with the camera as the rifle, getting many fine shots

"I think he is there," said Phoenix, pointing, and at exactly the same time the boar sprang up and ran straight between his legs! After it passed, both Phoenix and John shot, dropping the young boar in his tracks.

An exciting first afternoon for sure. Bally was successful in hitting up some pigs on a dam but that's a story for another time.

The next few days proved a little frustrating due to long grass. In the early hours of the morning in the fog and sub-zero temperatures, we didn't find any pigs.

Finally on our third afternoon we decided to check out another one of the many dams on the property. As usual, we were met with very high grass. Wading our way through it as we approached the dam, I saw a boar, sow and some suckers walking around the edge of the dam, heading towards us. As excitement grew I ran as quickly as I could to get to a tree to shoot from when the pigs presented a good shot for me.

The small mob was moving quickly, too. As I got to the tree the big boar was nearly out of sight. I lined up the sow and squeezed the trigger. I watched the sow drop and called out to Bally and John that I'd seen the boar run off to my left. He was too quick so the boys hit some of the suckers.

Over the next few days, once again, there were no real pig

> **A wedge-tailed eagle was eating John's pig and there was even a fox running around"**

movements in the early hours but late in the afternoons they seemed to be active. Checking back on another larger dam John had hit up on the previous afternoon, we came across another small mob of pigs rooting around. Nearby, a massive wedge-tailed eagle was eating John's pig from yesterday and there was even a fox running around in the mix. It seemed all the locals had turned up for some food.

John stayed where he was and Bally and I crept around to the far side of the dam where all the action was. The dam walls were quite tall, so we had plenty of cover out of the wind to sneak up on our unsuspecting prey.

As we made our way around and slowly walked up the dam wall, Bally and I could see the amazing sight of eagle, fox and pigs enjoying their afternoon feed. Bally offered me the largest pig and then chose his pig.

"We'll do three, two, one, squeeze the trigger," he said.

All my concentration was on the largest pig as I looked through my trusty Meopta scope. I heard Bally count three and in my excitement squeezed the trigger. The 6.5x55 Swede found its mark and Bally fired along with John, who was firing from the other side of the dam at a pig he had found.

Needless to say the stalk was yet again another success story on yet another Bally's Safari.

Rain was forecast for the next day and after an uneventful morning stalk the dark clouds rolled in and we could do nothing except head back to the dongers, pack, clean up and head home with more fond memories of hunting in the Aussie bush with good mates. Nothing better in the world!

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Weatherby Model 307 Range XP

The Range XP is built on Weatherby's newest bolt action rifle platform, the Model 307. Meant to complement the historic Mark V and Vanguard line-ups, the Model 307 action is a two-lug, cylindrical action compatible with many aftermarket accessories. It is designed to accommodate the vast offerings of stocks, triggers, rails, mounts and magazines that exist in today's marketplace. The Range XP is a shooter-friendly platform that can dominate the shooting range or the mountain range.

Through years of innovation and testing, the Model 307 action features a bolt that was designed to have a tool-less disassembly, allowing hunters and shooters to easily field strip it if needed. The bolt is equipped with an M16 style extractor for positive extraction and reliable ejection.

The Range XP comes standard with an externally adjustable TriggerTech Field trigger. The Magpul removable magazine is compatible with AICS magazines. The rifle has a lightweight vertical-grip stock that includes an adjustable cheekpiece and adjustable length of pull, providing a custom fit for the shooter. Touch points are textured for a nonslip grip and dual front swivel studs allow for multiple accessories.

Available in short and long actions, the Range XP not only offers some of Weatherby's historic magnum cartridges but is available in a wide range of the most popular cartridges on the market today.

Range XP is compatible with many aftermarket 700 platform parts, making it the most open platform in the Weatherby line-up. With an upgraded adjustable stock, trigger, bolt, fluted barrel and Accubrake, the Range XP brings a custom rifle feel without the custom price.

For more details ask at your local gun shop or visit tsaoutdoors.com.au.

Nitecore MH40GTR hunting light kit

With the Nitecore MH40GTR Hunting Kit, you've got everything you need to light your way on your next expedition. This kit contains an MH40GTR flashlight, which is a rechargeable high-intensity searchlight constructed from aerospace-grade aluminium alloy. The Cree XP-L HI V3 LED provides a maximum of 1200 lumens, with a maximum beam distance of 1000m.

With turbo, high, medium, low, strobe and SOS modes, you'll be all set for all kinds of scenarios. When you're in the moment, you can quickly switch between turbo and the user-defined modes by rotating the head of the light.

The light can be submerged to 2m. Its onboard charging port has a sleeve to protect it from impact and dust. The charging circuit has voltage detection which quickly and safely charges the torch.

The complete kit includes MH40GTR, a pair of NL1826 batteries, tactical ring, AC power adapter, RSW1 remote switch, optional weapon mount, lanyard and holster.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit tsaoutdoors.com.au.

Leupold RX-1400i TBR/W Gen 2 rangefinder

The RX-1400i TBR/W Gen 2 enters the market as the most versatile, feature-rich rangefinder in its class. Equipped with a bright red display and high-performance DNA laser engine, this lightning-fast rangefinder will take your hunting and shooting to the next level.

Its dead-on ranging engine delivers the speed and accuracy serious hunters demand, while its ballistically calculated ranges for riflemen — and Flightpath and trig solutions for archers — simplify even the most extreme uphill and downhill shots.

It can also calculate 16km/h windage holds and display additional holdovers in MOA, MIL, inches and centimetres. Other features include 5x magnification, TBR/W Angle Compensation, 3000-hour battery life, a maximum reflective range of 1400 yards and a very lightweight build at only 145 grams.

Adaptable and powerful, the RX-1400i TBR/W is the perfect addition to any hunter's pack.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit www.sporting.nioa.com.au.

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Remington Model 700 SPS Stainless

There is a cost that comes with high performance but in this case it's a lot less than you think. The Model 700 SPS Stainless (Special Purpose Synthetic) offers everything you love about the legendary Model 700, all at an extremely affordable price. The Model 700 SPS Stainless offers the unrivalled, out-of-the-box accuracy and high-end performance you've come to expect from America's most popular bolt-action centrefire rifle.

The SPS features an improved, ergonomically designed synthetic stock for better handling and enhanced overall functionality. The bead-blasted 416 stainless steel barrelled action comes clean without sights and is drilled and tapped for scope mounts. For added corrosion resistance, the internal fire control components are plated.

Other features include hinged floor-plate magazine, sling studs, a receiver machined from solid steel bar stock for unrivalled uniformity and strength. The cylindrical receiver design provides a solid bedding base in the stock for consistent shot placement.

The Model 700's recessed bolt face locks up inside the counter-bored breech of the barrel, which is surrounded by the receiver, forming "three rings of steel" enclosing the cartridge case head for unparalleled strength plus lots more.

It's available now in .223 Rem, .243, 6.5 Creedmoor, .308, .270 Win, 7mm-08 Rem, 30-06 Sprg, 300 Win Mag and 7mm Rem Mag.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit sporting.nioa.com.au.

Ocaso Strategy folding knife

Ocaso specialises in premium gentleman's knives for everyday carry. Designed by leading knifemakers, their attention to detail and quality of workmanship are second to none. One such knife is the Strategy, designed by custom knifemaker Mike Wallace. The Strategy is a knife you can depend on and take anywhere you go. It is lightweight, durable, compact and comfortable enough to be carried in your pocket or ready for off-grid adventure out bush.

Featuring an overall length of 20cm open, its 9cm blade is made from German K110 (D2) steel for outstanding edge retention and toughness. The handle was designed for ideal comfort and function and is made from a choice of high-strength milled G-10, peel-ply carbon-fibre/G-10 or aircraft-grade aluminium.

Featuring a fold-over, ambidextrous, deep carry clip and stainless steel caged bearings with flipper opening for ultra-smooth deployment, the Strategy is the perfect complement to any pocket or adventure gear bag.

Ask to see the new Ocaso Strategy folder at your local gun shop or for more information visit osaaustralia.com.au.

Pro-Tactical Accuload digital reloading scales

The Accuload digital reloading powder scale from Pro-Tactical is a must-have accessory for all reloaders. This accurate digital scale will ensure your handloads are spot-on every time. Increase the accuracy of not only your target ammunition, but also your hunting loads by keeping a close eye on powder charge levels. This affordable digital scale is also superb for any safety checking steps in the reloading process.

The scales have the ability to calculate in multiple measurements including grains, grams, carats, ounces, troy ounces and more. Another feature is the compact design of the scale which is perfect for the reloader with limited bench space and for storage when not in use. In fact, it's small enough to fit in your pocket.

The unit runs on two AAA batteries, which means no annoying cords which can easily get tangled or in the way when reloading. It has space for two spare batteries so you'll never get caught short. Other features include easy-to-read LCD display, auto shut-down after 180 seconds of no use, auto calibration, measurement of up to 1500 grains with 0.1gn accuracy and lots more.

Ask for the Pro-Tactical Accuload digital reloading scales at your local gun shop or visit protactical.com.au for further details.

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Miroku Mk 10 Side Plate Deluxe

Miroku's elegant sporting model, the Mk 10 Side Plate Deluxe is a gun you would be proud to use in any company. It's suitable for both game shooting and on the sporting ground and is available in the choice of 30" or 32" barrels. Crafted with thorough attention to detail, the Mk 10 Side Plate Deluxe showcases a timeless elegance that sets it apart from the rest.

The ornately flourished engraving on the receiver is the most eye-catching feature on this gun. The finely chequered, oil-finished Turkish walnut stock is not only visually stunning, but also ergonomically designed to provide a comfortable and secure grip, ensuring consistent and controlled handling in every shot. Constructed from the finest steel, each barrel undergoes rigorous testing and quality control to deliver exceptional performance shot after shot.

Other features include 15mm Pachmayr recoil pad, jewelled monoblock, adjustable trigger, 3" chamber, four Briley C300 interchangeable chokes and lots more.

Ask to see this piece of art at your local gun shop or visit osaaustralia.com.au.

Ridgeline Speed Sticks

Ridgeline Speed Sticks are ideal as a shooting aid as they are fully adjustable for height and feature a strong 360-degree rotating half yoke as a gun rest. Available as a monopod or tripod, they are adjustable from 1m (39") to 1.65m (65") for use when kneeling or standing. As the head is removable, Speed Sticks are also ideal as a mount for optical gear such as a camera or spotting scope as they fit 3/8" or ¼" threaded fixtures.

Another great feature is the fact they include strong but lightweight aluminium legs that are adjustable via a conveniently located trigger mechanism that locks the height in place quickly and easily. I personally have the monopod Speed Stick and find it's also ideal as a hiking pole when negotiating steep terrain. For fast, rock-solid stability, Ridgeline's Speed Sticks are an excellent choice at a very affordable price.

See them at your local gun shop or visit ridgelineclothing.com.au for more information.

Spika Drover backpacks

Spika offers a range of packs in its Drover series, in a large selection of sizes from a waist pack to an 80-litre backpack. Purpose designed to cover your style of hunting, some models include the Hauler system that will allow you to carry out a load of meat separately, without having to put it in with all your other gear. The pack Hauler system, which is based on a frame, is available in the 40L and 80L models. The frame is interchangeable with both packs and ideal for the meat or trophy hunter on day or extended hunting trips.

Available in Biarri camo or olive, these packs offer extendable storage capacity, quick access to main compartments, front stash pockets, external tie points and hydration bladder compartments. Put through their paces in Australia, New Zealand and North America, these packs are proven for the serious outdoorsman and offer loads of additional features.

To complement the Drover Hauler range, Spika also offers a range of meat bags in three different sizes that are durable, breathable and reusable.

To find out more ask at your local gun shop or visit spika.com.au.

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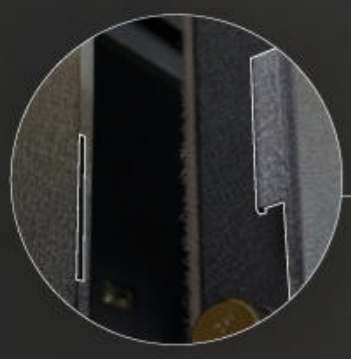

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BY NICK HARVEY

Long-throating the .338 Win Mag

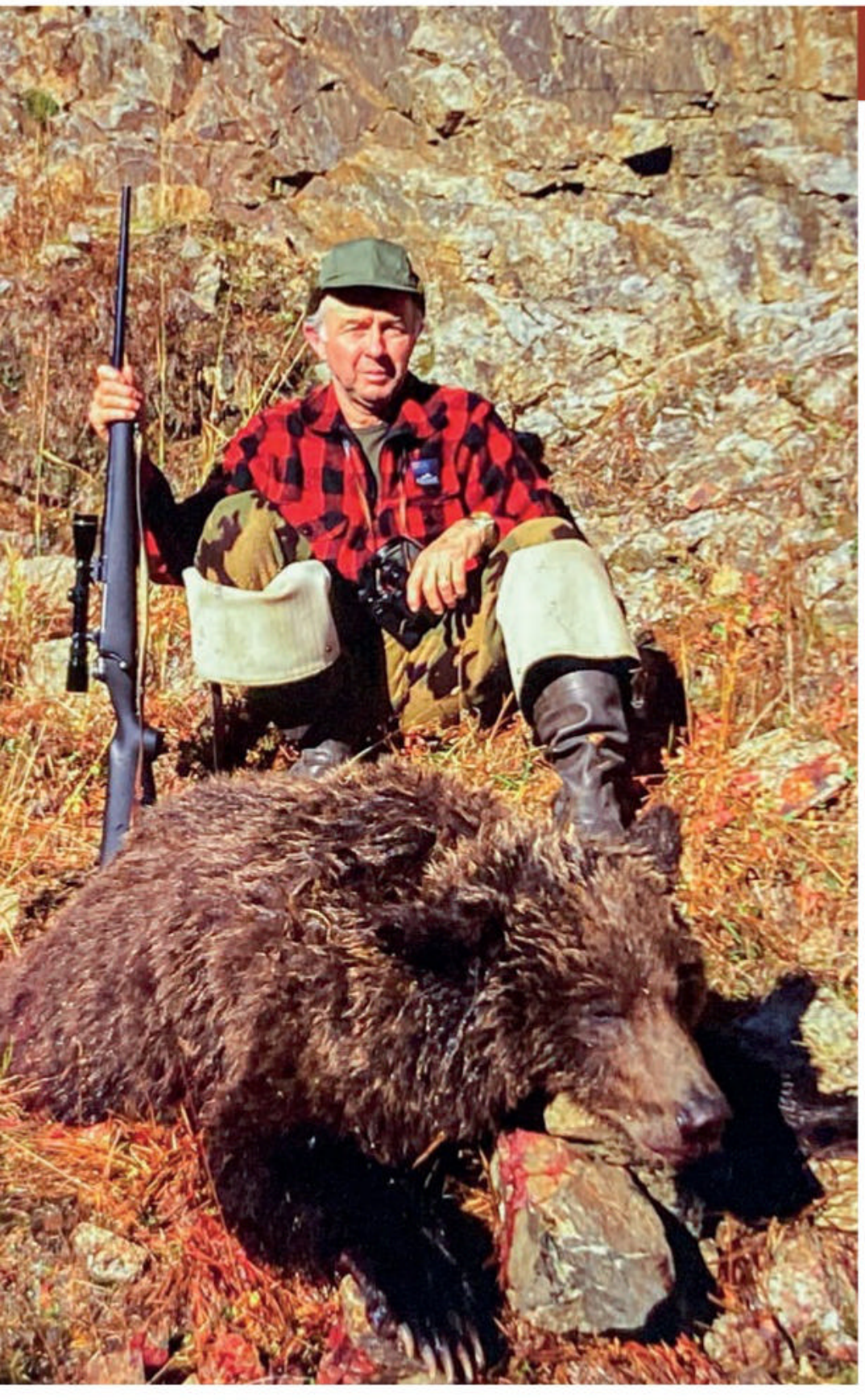
An outstanding performer on all game, medium to heavy, at distances short or long, this belted magnum has hidden potential

OF all the belted magnum dangerous-game cartridges I've used on game ranging in size from red stag to buffaloes, the .338 Winchester Magnum is undoubtably the most useful and versatile of them all. I'm not alone in my liking for the .338 either; this is a view that was shared by such notable hunters as Colonel Charles Askins, Finn Aagard, Jim Carmichel and Bob Hagel.

My good friend Charlie Askins was the first gun writer to field test the .338 prior to its introduction in 1958. He gave it a thorough workout in Africa, scoring many one-shot kills on a variety of game ranging in size from the 20kg Thompson's gazelle to the 700kg eland.

> "The .338 fills a slot between the .30 magnums and the renowned .375 H&H"

The .338 Win Mag fills a slot between the .30 magnums and the renowned .375 H&H magnum. For all big-game purposes, it matches anything its competitors can do and then some. This versatile calibre combines heavy bullets of good sectional density with high velocity. It gives outstanding performance on large game with heavy bullets and has a flat trajectory with lighter spitzer-type bullets for long-range shooting at deer-size animals.



LEFT: The .338 Win Mag is the most popular calibre with guides and hunters of Alaskan moose and bear

Winchester launched the .338 Mag with a 200gn Power Point bullet at a nominal 3000fps and a 250gn Silvertip at 2700fps. Later a 300gn Power Point at 2450fps was added. In its 1986 catalogue Winchester listed only the 200gn Power Point at 2960fps and a 225gn spitzer soft-point at 2780fps.

Comparing its ballistics with the .340 Weatherby made me wonder if the .338 Mag was getting all the velocity it was capable of. The quoted muzzle velocity of .340 Weatherby factory ammunition with a 250gn bullet is 2850fps against 2700fps for the factory 250gn in the .338 Win Mag. This would appear to give the .340 Mag an edge until you realise that the .340's velocity is taken from a 26" barrel with 19mm (¾") of free-bore. Winchester's ballistics were taken with standard factory ammunition in a 24" barrel with a normal length throat.

The .340 is based on the full-length .300 Weatherby case, whereas the .338 Mag is based on the shorter .458 Win Mag case, so the .340 has more powder space.

The .338 case is 63.50mm (2.50") long and has standard H&H magnum head dimensions but minimum body taper and a 25-degree shoulder angle, give it a modern conformation. Overall factory loaded cartridge length is listed as 84.84mm (3.340") — or similar to the .30-06 — adapting it for use in standard length actions.

I decided to find out if the .338 Win could give the .340 a run for its money without any increase in pressure. This is normally done by using an action long enough to allow bullets to be seated level with the base of the neck and with the chamber long-throated to utilise all the 338's available case capacity.

To do this requires a longer action than that used for the

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standard .338. A magnum-length action was needed for my project. Fortunately, I had one on hand — my Whitworth Express, an Interarms Mark X Mauser made for Whitworth in England which had been modified by the factory to handle a full-length H&H magnum cartridge.

An MAB barrel was obtained and I gave the job of assembling the metalwork to Bob Taylor with instructions to dock the barrel to 24", increase the throat length to handle reloads with an overall length of 88.39mm (3.480"), add a low-swing, wing-type safety and adjust the trigger to break at 1.36kg (3lb).

Alan Nauman of Corporal Trading in Queensland made the rugged hand-laid synthetic stock, which is utilitarian. I topped the rifle with a Leupold Vari-X III 2.5-8x36 scope in a two-piece Leupold mount. Field ready with sling and four rounds in the magazine, the outfit weighs 4.1kg (9lb) and represents the utmost in stability and strength.

Possibly the biggest single advantage of the .338 Mag is the splendid sectional density (SD) of the bullets in weights of 225, 250 and 300 grains. Initially, I concentrated my efforts on Barnes 225gn XFB, Speer's 250gn Grand Slam and Barnes' 300gn Original FMJ, which have SDs of .281, .313 and .376, together with the respectable ballistic coefficients of .482, .436 and .416.

Winchester Super-X cases were very uniform. Case life is long and only an occasional case showed expanded primer pockets to a noticeable extent, and then not enough to ruin the cases.

In my usual fashion, I miked fired cases just ahead of the belt to determine comparative pressures. Cases fired with Winchester factory loads measured 13.043mm (0.5135") in diameter at that point. Hence, I called this reading 'normal' and restricted handloads to an increased case expansion of .013mm (.0005"); that is, 13.056mm (0.5140").

Most manuals list data obtained using standard large-rifle primers. I tried CCI 250 magnums, but could detect no difference in velocities or pressure between them and the standard CCI 200. While magnum primers are recommended, both W-120 and CCI 200 primers gave reliable and efficient ignition with all powders used.

Propellant powders with medium-slow burning rates such as AR2209, AR2213sc, Re-19 and Re-22 are usually recommended for giving the highest velocities and generally the finest accuracy as well. At first, the powder that stood out was ADI's AR2209, which gave high velocity and good groups with all bullet weights except the Barnes 300gn FMJ, which required a slower burning powder.

This 300gn Barnes FMJ has the same weight as the heaviest .375 H&H bullet, but its sectional density (.416 against .305) is better. It is reasonable then to speculate that performance, especially for deep penetration, will be better than that of the formidable .375 H&H.

Handloads for the .338 Mag had light bullets seated above the base of the neck while heavy bullets extended to the bottom of the shoulder. All loads were worked up to the maximum safe pressure levels, then backed off to just below. All loads generated high pressure, but after firing many of the test cases six to eight times, there were no loose primer pockets or other signs of case failure.

However, I warn readers that any loads listed for my long-throated Whitworth Express should not be used in any other rifle.

I set out to determine the influence on velocity of case capacity and extended free-bore. The initial tests used Hornady 200gn and Barnes 225gn XFB, Hornady 225gn, Speer 250gn Grand Slam, and Barnes 300gn FMJ. Later I added the Nosler 210gn Partition, the old Speer 275gn and Woodleigh 225gn to the mix.

It became apparent that this particular barrel and chamber

ON THIS PAGE

1 Some of the bullets used in the .338 Whitworth (left to right): 180gn Nosler Ballistic Tip, W-W 200gn Power Point, Hornady 200gn Spire Point, Woodleigh 225gn PP WC, Barnes 225gn XFB, 250gn Sierra BT, Speer 250gn Grand Slam, Hornady 250gn RN and 300gn Barnes FMJ

2 The .338 Win Mag shooting a 225gn Barnes bullet dropped this fine double-shovel Barren Ground caribou at over 200yd

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would handle a lot more powder than the loading manuals show for the standard .338 Win Mag.

Starting with the 200gn Speer bullet, the load was worked up to a charge of 79gn of AR2209, which gave an average reading of 3064fps at the muzzle. This bullet could be loaded with its base level with the base of the neck, an ideal arrangement.

Then I loaded the 210gn Nosler Partition over 78gn of AR2209 and got 3116fps. Although the 210 Nosler is slightly longer, it could be seated so that its base didn't protrude any farther into the case thanks to the long chamber throat. Cartridge overall length (COL) for both was 87.00mm (3.425").

The 225gn Barnes is an even longer bullet, but when loaded to a COL of 88.56mm (3.485") its base was level with the juncture of neck and shoulder. A charge of 77gn of AR2209 launched it at 3056fps.

The old 275gn Speer semi-spitzer and 73gn of AR2209 achieved 2676, but 78gn of AR2213sc boosted the velocity to 2730fps. The long throat accommodated its long bearing surface without varying the amount of free travel very much and COL was 88.56mm (3.485"), with not much less seating depth than the Barnes 225gn XFB.

The lengthened throat resulted in a larger amount of free-bore with the lighter bullets. Depending on length and design, but with the limited capacity of the .338 Win case, it was difficult to use enough powder to overcome the free-bore effect.

It took 68gn of Re-22 to boost the 300gn Barnes FMJ along at 2430fps. This blunt-nosed longster protruded below the base of the shoulder when loaded to a COL of 84.51mm (3.327"). At the range with the 225gn Barnes sighted-in 2½" high at 100yd (64mm at 91m), the 300gn FMJ was on the point of aim. At 50yd it was ½" (13mm) low. This is an ideal set-up. It means the 225gn bullet can be used for shooting big game at longer distances while the 300gn FMJ can be relied on for close-in work on heavy big game like buffaloes without having to re-sight my rifle.

With this long throating there was no sign of high pressure with the heavy bullets and AR2209 powder, and it was obvious that more powder could be used if the case would hold it.

The Super-X case after firing holds 83.7gn of Re-22, 84.9gn of AR2209 and 86.6gn of AR2213sc when filled to the top of the neck and tapped down. This indicates that AR2213sc may well be a better choice than either AR2209 or Re-22 for 250gn and 300gn bullets. A top charge behind the 250gn Speer Grand Slam was 77gn of Re-22 for 2820fps.

"A long-throated chamber allows bullets to be seated out for an increase in case capacity"

Long throating allows bullets to be seated out with much less compression of powder despite the increase in charge weights. All loads proved to be much more uniform and accuracy was universally good. Three-shot groups at 100yd averaged around 1" with the lighter bullets and under 1½" with the heavy ones.

In a standard .338 Win Mag with standard throating and overall loaded cartridge length of 83.82-84.84mm (3.300-3.340") and a 24" barrel, it's possible to gain up to 100fps over factory ballistics. But this requires heavy compression of the powder and often velocity is not uniform.

A long-throated chamber allows bullets to be seated out for an increase in case capacity and a worthwhile gain in velocity. With this case and bore diameter, the increase will benefit heavy bullets over lighter bullets. It's possible to drive the light 180gn Nosler AccuBond at up to 3300fps, but I prefer to stay with a strong 225-grainer for all-round use.

My preferred load would be the Barnes 225gn XFB. Hard driven at 3056fps it has 4665ft-lb of muzzle energy; it retains 3300ft-lb at 200yd and 2760 at 300. For very heavy game at close range in the brush, I'd take along a few 300gn Barnes FMJ loads. Its big, round point and rather modest velocity of 2450fps would outdo the 300gn solid in the .375 H&H for penetration while a muzzle energy of 3998ft-lb would provide almost equal knockdown power.

ABOVE: Out of a dozen moose, the only one that was dropped in his tracks was this one, with a running shot at 50yd

LEFT: Nick's Whitworth Express based on an Interarms Mauser action originally wore a Leupold VX-II 2.5-8x36 scope

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BY CHLOE GOLDING

Sambar surprise

Chloe finds sambar on her rusa hunt, and it changes everything

OLD Pop and I finally found a day that suited us both to head out to our favourite deer block in search of a rusa stag. I met him and his GSP Bonnie at the gate. The wind was already blowing in every direction.

Grabbing our guns, shooting sticks and Bonnie, we made our way up the creek, glancing into the thick ferns below. Slowly we made our way to a well-used crossing, littered with kangaroo, fox and deer prints.

I climbed up the muddy bank with ease, turning back just in time to see Bonnie nearly send Old Pop into the creek.

Deer had been there. The whirlwind of smells sent Bonnie into overdrive. Following a game trail we made our way up and out of the gully, then across the flat to some thicker scrub known for plenty of game sign.

Nothing was fresh, the wallows used over the fallow rut were dried up and there were no fresh rubs on the trees.

In usual Chloe fashion, now was when decided I had to pee, sending Old Pop back to the wallows. Moving to the opposite side a gum, I turned to drop my dacks when I spotted the face of a sambar yearling watching 30 metres away. With nothing between her and I and the wind in the wrong direction, she took off into the thick scrub.

Having never seen a sambar before, I took off in the direction of Old Pop, buttoning my pants as I went, the urge to pee gone.

I described exactly what had happened and Old Pop agreed I had spotted my first elusive sambar. He left the rest of the hunt's plan up to me: sit and wait or keep moving.

With trail cameras waiting to be checked and the light fading, I opted to keep moving. We made our way back through the scrub, checking each camera as we passed. There wasn't much time left before dark, so we made ourselves comfortable overlooking another cleared flat, glassing for movement.

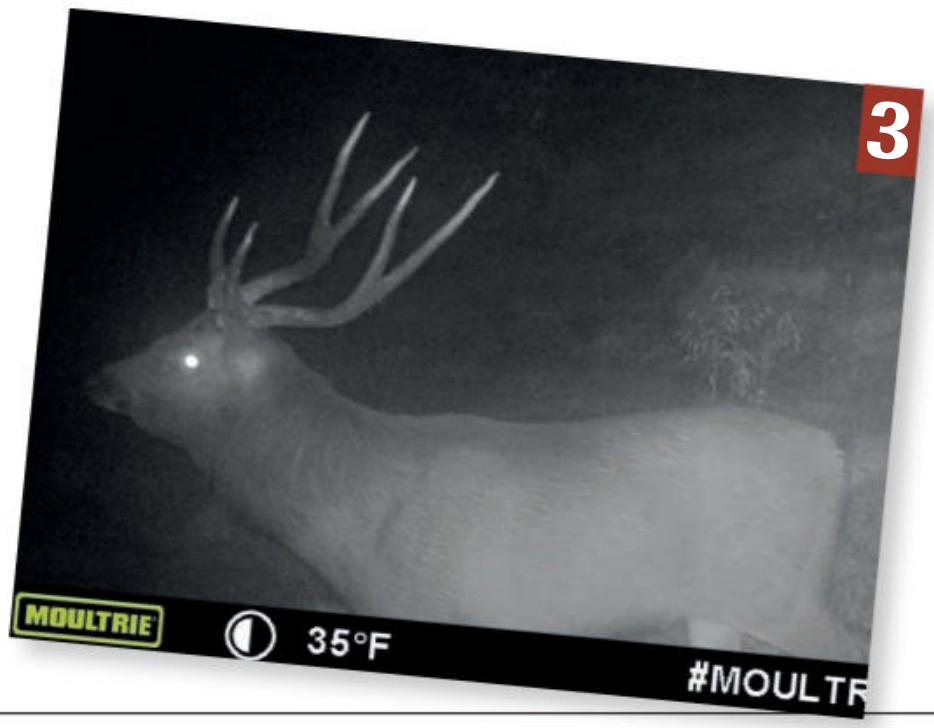
"Deer," whispered Old Pop.

> **I turned to drop my dacks when I spotted the face of a sambar yearling"**

A sambar hind darted down the fence line and into the scrub, no doubt having caught our scent long before we had seen her.

The deer were there but the wind wasn't on our side. Another successful hunt in my eyes.

The trophy was the beautiful stag we caught on our trail camera. My next challenge.



ON THIS PAGE

1 Bonnie waits patiently, attuned to myriad smells

2 Watching and waiting in the late afternoon sun

3 The stag caught on the trail camera has become Chloe's next challenge

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Blake Fisher says this was a tough pig that took two shots from his .300 Weatherby Magnum, both in the right place, to anchor him. Blake was using 200gn Woodleigh handloads, too! Great photo and a great boar, Blake.

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Late in the dry season on a very hot day, **Mick Barrett** pushed this tusky boar out of its bed. He cleaned up with his Lee Speed .303.

"Hurry please, this thing is heavy," **Jackson Ball** said while his Dad was trying to get the photo. Jackson tells us he enjoyed the stalk in from about 160m away after they first saw the boar under a spotlight. He dropped it from about 40m using the torch mounted on his rifle. "Had a nice set of hooks," he says.

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