

THE JUNIOR Shooter

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 19



WIN
1 of 2 Leatherman
Monarch 6 torches

A yellow starburst graphic containing the text 'WIN 1 of 2 Leatherman Monarch 6 torches' and an image of two black Leatherman Monarch 6 torches.

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Editorial

Awarm welcome to the 19th edition of *The Junior Shooter*. We set the ball rolling with our feature on Victorian SSAA members, brother and sister Damon and Darcie Morton, who are both making an impact internationally in the demanding sport of biathlon. The pair explain to Communications Officer Sam Talbot about the rigours of shooting amid cross-country skiing and their annual commute to Europe for training.

Sam follows this up with an account of how things unfolded at SSAA New South Wales's Junior Target Shooting Camp. A total of 20 juniors headed for the SSAA Batemans Bay Branch range earlier this year where they savoured their first experience of recreational shooting in four categories. International shotgun shooters Michael McNabb and Gemma Dunn ensured expert tuition was close at hand.

There were more fun times for youngsters who vied to put their hands on the Tartini Grand Slam award. Brad Allen outlines how downing five individual feral species on a South East Queensland property under the watch of SSAA-affiliated organisers held the key to picking up one of the coveted shields. Also in the hunting vein, Joseph Nugent discovers the importance of identifying and ageing sign while out on manoeuvres with his dad.

Looking ahead, we give details of how to be part of the 2017 SSAA National Junior Challenge set for the SSAA Para Branch in South Australia in July.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *The Junior Shooter*. Don't forget to enter our competition, with one of two Leatherman Monarch 6 torches up for grabs!

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Darcie competes in the Sprint event at the Youth Olympic Games.

Darcie and Damon Morton - Australia's best biathletes

by Communications Officer Sam Talbot

Lining up five targets from 50m away with a .22-calibre rifle on a sunny summer day is pretty standard for most shooters. The Morton siblings from regional Victoria, on the other hand, take the same five shots in freezing conditions with a heart rate of 180 beats per minute, while wearing a large pair of skis. Not only are they taking the shots in those conditions, but they are also taking them very well. At just 17 and 20 years of age respectively, Darcie and Damon Morton are the number one female and male biathletes in Australia.

While shooting events in Australia tend to not receive the media attention they deserve unless it's the Olympic Games (and even then only gold medals gain a mention), it's a very different story in Europe. "Biathlon is the biggest winter TV spectator watched sport in Europe," said Cameron Morton, the father of Darcie and Damon. "It's a huge sport in Europe and there is a huge fan following. It's the national sport for Norway, Germany and Russia among others. Athletes are developed through sports schools and professional teams and the level is extremely high - it's like cycling but in the winter." To give you some idea, a recent race in which Damon competed sold more than 100,000 spectator tickets.

It all started for Darcie and Damon in East Gippsland,

Victoria, where they learned to shoot in a paddock owned by a local farmer who their father would barter with each year in exchange for use of the land. A few years later, with a lot of fitness training behind them, including running, skating and skiing as well as honing their shooting skills at their local range SSAA East Gippsland, the pair are competing at the top of their sport. Currently, they are living in Europe for training and competing, but they travel back to Australia during the European summer. The past few years have been a cycle of moving back and forth between hemispheres in order to create a permanent winter for them.

The individual biathlon event is quite straightforward. Men race by cross-country skiing over 20km while women race over 15km. This skiing is broken down into five laps, with each lap finishing with a shooting phase. The biathlete shoots four times in the order of prone, standing, prone and standing, totalling 20 targets. The targets are 115mm-wide circles and flip from black to white when hit. For each missed target, a time penalty is applied (usually one minute) to the biathlete's overall time.

Another common biathlon event is the 'Sprint', which is similar but only 10km for men and 7.5km for women. Plus, instead of time penalties, the biathletes are penalised by

having to ski an extra 150m for every missed target. It's clear why those who participate in biathlon not only require superb fitness, but also a high level of skill with a firearm.

Biathlon shooting is done with a smallbore .22-calibre rifle, which must weigh more than 3.4kg and have a trigger weight of more than 500g. The rifle must be cycled manually with either a bolt-action or a straight-pull action (Fortner). All athletes must carry their own ammunition with them while they ski as well as the rifle, which they do by strapping it to their backs with the ammo attached to the rifle.

Both Damon and Darcie use an Anschutz Fortner 1827 .22-calibre rifle, which has a straight bolt action. The main

benefit of the straight bolt is reloading becomes faster and smoother. The straight bolt is the preferred action of nearly 100 per cent of biathletes on the World Cup circuit. When competing in the cold conditions, which can plummet as low as -15C, Damon and Darcie's preferred ammunition is Lapua Polar.

Both Damon and Darcie use a 'sprint' barrel, which their father Cameron says weighs about 400g less than a normal barrel. "The lighter barrel allows the rifle to be as close to the overall minimum weight of the rifle as possible," said Cameron. "The obvious disadvantage to a lighter barrel is that it's harder to be accurate with, but Damon in particular

Both Damon and Darcie use a Anschutz Fortner 1827 .22-calibre rifle, which has a straight bolt action.



Darcie shooting standing.



has managed to become very competent with it.”

Off the biathlon range, Damon enjoys doing some hunting with rabbits being his main target species. However, he says he tries not to make a habit of shooting larger calibre rifles because he needs to have the feeling of not anticipating recoil and flinching when back on the sporting range.

Damon says biathlon shooting is essentially like regular shooting but with extra challenges. “The factors of a high heart rate, lots of noisy spectators and a busy and active range with lots of other biathletes coming and going make shooting all the more challenging,” he said. “The art is to combine quick shooting but maintain accuracy with a high

heart rate. Once the heart rate drops too much, then the rifle shakes more.”

In the International Biathlon Union (IBU) Cup races this season, Damon shot all his targets in the prone cleanly. His overall shooting average is 92 per cent, which is made all the more impressive since he only takes between 25 and 27 seconds to shoot from the time he stops skiing to the time he leaves the shooting lane. Darcie is not very far behind him either and is steadily improving.

Although three years younger than her brother, Darcie has also represented Australia in table tennis, making her no stranger to the rush of elite competition. “Biathlon is great because it combines two sports, which are entirely different,” said Darcie. “The challenge of shooting fast and accurately against other competitors after skiing hard is always interesting.”

Darcie had Australia’s best female international results in the IBU Cup in December and qualified to remain on the circuit. She qualified for the senior world circuit as a youth athlete in 2016 by finishing 16th at the World Under-19 Championships in the 12.5km individual event where she only missed three out of 20 targets. She also placed 16th in the Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, last year in the 6km Sprint event and only missed one target in the event.

Earlier this year, Damon competed in the Biathlon World Championship in Hochfilzen, Austria. Even though Damon is still a junior and was the youngest athlete in the field, he finished only 10 per cent behind the fastest time, despite some bad luck with changing wind conditions during his shooting. Damon finished in 87th out of 103 participants, but is expected to continue improving. He ranked as the 16th fastest in the prone shooting and 24th fastest in the standing shooting.


Damon says biathlon competitions are always interesting because it’s not always the favourite who wins, rather it’s whoever can get everything right on the day. “Cross-country skiing is a very good sport for being outdoors and it requires a high degree of fitness. When combined with shooting, it’s a fun and healthy sport as well as culture.”

Darcie and Damon now have their sights firmly set on their next goal, the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea in 2018. Their father Cameron, who competed in the biathlon for Australia in the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics, is hopeful and confident both of his children can make it.

If you’re interested in following the Morton siblings, check out their blog at damonmortonbiathlon.com Damon and Darcie are also always looking for sponsors as biathletes do not receive much funding in Australia.



The Tartini Grand Slam



Morgan, left, and Michael practise their shooting skills from different field positions, on the mini metallic silhouette targets on the Z .22LR range.

- junior hunters learn the ropes by Brad Allen

It's no secret that the average age of hunters and shooters in Australia is usually on the older side, and no-one can argue the fact that children are indeed our future, especially with recreational hunting and the shooting sports. Several years ago, with that in mind, the SSAA-affiliated hunting club that manages hunting activities on our South East Queensland property introduced an incentive for the children and grandchildren of our members, which encourages them to sample shooting and hunting of all the available feral species on the acreage.

With the advent of the SSAA Sponsored Junior program, this hunting opportunity was further widened to encompass children who may not otherwise have had the chance to participate in hunting and shooting activities.

We are quite fortunate with the diversity of feral species that are available for hunting on the property, including rabbits, foxes, pigs, goats, fallow deer, feral cats (which appear to be on the increase) and the very odd wild dog. Bearing in mind that all these species need to be controlled and managed, there was a golden opportunity for our members to teach their youngsters how it's done and to pass on

our hunting and shooting knowledge and skills to the next generation.

During discussions on the subject with some of the elder statesmen of our club, including past *Australian Shooter* columnist Warren McKay, and several other experienced members, it was evident that there was a veritable treasure trove of knowledge about firearms and hunting within our group. Everyone was enthusiastic about the project and we came up with the idea of awarding an individual trophy of some kind to encourage the junior hunters to participate.

A few ideas were thrown around and we agreed that the award should be for the taking of at least one animal of each of the five most common feral species on the estate: these being rabbit, fox, pig, goat and fallow deer. Thus, the Tartini Grand Slam award was born - 'Tartini' being the name of the property.

The award would be a significant achievement for each of the kids so we decided that the shield should be something special, that they could keep to remind themselves of their hunting experiences and achievements on the land. A photo is sometimes worth a thousand words and as can be seen



One of the keen young ladies participating in the hunting project, Rachael Staines with her first fallow deer taken for meat with grandad Keith's .243 rifle.



Young Ryan Staines with his fallow doe, a meat animal. Again, this was taken with grandad's Sako lever-action .243.



Frank Witcombe learns how to safely use a knife while skinning and butchering his young meat goat.



One of the latest additions to the team, SSAA Sponsored Junior Michael McDonald with his first deer.



Luke Baker, hunting with dad Geoff, took this respectable granite belt boar.

the shield turned out extremely well, made from stained timber with the five pewter feral animals clearly displayed.

The excitement generated among the boys and girls was greater than anticipated and there was immediate competition as to who would be the first to achieve the honour. The pressure was on the parents, grandparents and other members to go hunting at every available juncture and to learn all aspects of targeting the different species.

As some of the kids had never used firearms, we set up an area where they could be trained and coached in safety procedures, starting with Z rounds in .22LR rifles. Many years ago, I purchased a set of steel mini metallic silhouette animal targets for target practice. As I've written before, many kids tend to enjoy reactive targets as they offer immediate feedback on their shot. There's no doubt about the result, with the satisfying response of an audible 'tink' and the falling silhouette to indicate a hit.

We start the youngsters shooting from the bench over sandbags and eventually transition to the other field positions including, prone, sitting supported and unsupported, standing supported and unsupported, and our all-time

favourite, standing and shooting over 'shooting sticks', which has been warmly accepted by many of our members hunting with their juniors.

I hunted in Africa with Warren McKay many years ago, where it was the norm for all hunters to use shooting sticks, either the two- or three-legged variety. Professional hunters employ them for many reasons, but mostly because they work so well as a steady and immediate rifle rest. Therefore, this contributes to their high success rate and to satisfied clients.

I was impressed with the practicality of shooting sticks and immediately adopted them back home in Australia for my own shooting, especially when hunting with the kids, where a solid rifle rest was now always available exactly where we needed one. There was no more need to move that bit further forward to that tree for a rest, which usually ended in disaster after being detected by our prey, or have the kids shoot from the prone position over a bipod, which is often impractical due to long grass and other factors.

Just like hunting clients in Africa, our own success rate skyrocketed, with the boys routinely taking animals cleanly



Above: Macen Allen is presented with the first Tartini Grand Slam Junior Hunter Award by SSAA National President Geoff Jones. Right: The timber and pewter shield.



Bow or rifle, it's all hunting! Morgan with a nice young pig taken with his compound bow



Traves Staines with grandad Keith's Sako .243 and a fat young nanny for the pot.



Rachael Staines was the first young lady to earn her Grand Slam trophy for taking five different species of feral animals on the property, accepting same from former SSAA columnist and keen hunter, Warren McKay.

over varying distances. The other aspect of shooting sticks worth mentioning is that when a standing shot over sticks is taken, the kids don't need to hold up a heavy rifle (which is done by the sticks) and the felt recoil is far less to the shooter, which is important when teaching kids to shoot centrefire rifles.

We always match the calibre to the animal hunted, with the .22LR by far the preferred one for the bunnies. However, with the right projectiles the .222 and .223 are plenty of gun for everything else on the property, including fallow deer. That being said, most youngsters usually have no trouble using the .243, which would have to be one of the best 'kids calibres' around for medium game. Giving more than adequate performance on game up to the size of red deer with minimal recoil, it's a no-brainer where kids are concerned and it's a favoured calibre with them on our property. We also noticed that it wasn't long before some of the more adventurous kids were happily hunting with their dad or grandad's rifles, right up to .270s and even 30-06s firing full loads without any problems.

I have also used reduced loads in the .270 with great success, negating the need to carry a lesser calibre for the smaller hunters, but giving nothing away in performance on game. My favourite .270 reduced load of 40 grains of AR2206H behind the excellent 110-grain Barnes TSX projectile is a real winner, as it shoots less than MOA in my

rifle and only 1" lower than my regular 130-grain load at 100 yards with .223-level recoil.

Hearing protection for the kids while we are hunting on the property is always obligatory, with a minimum of earplugs and preferably electronic earmuffs. When the junior hunters use electronic earmuffs, they can be quietly coached through the shot, to enhance their marksmanship and shot placement.

The outcome of all this has had an extremely satisfying and positive effect on everyone involved. It almost goes without saying that hunting and shooting are family-orientated activities where the participation of parents or grandparents with the kids is a mandatory condition. Consequently, we have all managed to spend a lot of quality time bonding with the kids, teaching them many meaningful life skills that they may not otherwise have acquired. The hunting and shooting skills they have been taught just can't be learned from any other source.

The success of our junior hunter program was further enhanced in April 2014 when my son, Macen, was awarded the SSAA 2013 'Junior Hunter of the Year' for Queensland. Much of what Macen had learned about the different aspects of hunting and game management relates directly to the input from many of the wise old hunters in our scheme who are only too willing to share their considerable hunting knowledge with the kids.

Michael, left, and Morgan with a brace of bunnies.



Traves Staines with his shooting sticks and a fat young sow shot with the Sako .243.



Steph with her first rabbit taken with the .22.



Another young huntress, Bec Baker, with dad's .22LR and her first rabbit.



Steph Baker ready to head bush with dad Geoff for an afternoon hunt, with a rifle and a set of Polecat shooting sticks.



Traves Staines is awarded his Grand Slam trophy by former SSAA columnist Warren McKay.



Hunting success is one thing, but the kids have also been exposed to the quality deer management scheme that we operate on the property. This has given them the opportunity to learn about game management firsthand, where they have each gained an understanding of the principles involved.

Not only do the children hunt for trophy animals, but meat hunting is also a large part of their hunting experiences where deer and other species need to be culled to maintain optimum game numbers, in line with the management scheme. With an abundance of deer, rabbits and goats on the property, it makes good sense to use this resource with many of the families hunting for and preparing game meat for the table.

As a result, learning how to prepare game animals for meals is yet another aspect of their experiences. You would probably be surprised just how many people in the wider community have absolutely no idea how to prepare an animal from the paddock to the plate. Our kids learn it all, and enjoy themselves immensely in the process, acquiring the necessary skills on how to safely use sharp knives. A by-product of the butchering process is the anatomy lessons, showing the youngsters where the internal organs of each animal lay within the individual species chests (as they are all different). This knowledge enhances their shot placement and ensures the ethical hunter's

desired outcome, that being one-shot kills.

Just sharing time in the bush with the kids is great, but apart from the hunting and shooting, there have also been other enjoyable learning experiences. Teaching the kids to fish in the river for cod and yellowbelly, both with lures and bait, has been both fun and rewarding for all concerned with an emphasis on catch and release.

As the kids grow (and their legs are long enough to reach the peddles), most of them have also learned to drive manual vehicles, which is no load to carry through life, and a breakthrough that some of them may not otherwise have had.

Watching the children grow as they learn the practical life skills afforded to them through this hunting program has been a rewarding event for the tutors as well as the children. It's been my view that properly supervised exposure to hunting and firearms teaches children responsibility and respect for the animals they hunt, which leads to a level of maturity that is not always seen today.

We have definitely fostered a love of hunting and the outdoors with the kids, and the tutors have all learned a thing or two along the way! It's an ongoing and enjoyable labour of love to educate the next generation of hunters and shooters to take over where we will eventually leave off.

SSAA NSW's 2017 Junior Target Shooting Camp

by Communications Officer Sam Talbot



The happy bunch of junior campers with some of the helpers.

The future of our sport appears to be in safe hands in New South Wales, with 20 junior shooters converging on the Deep Creek Shooting Complex at the SSAA Batemans Bay Branch from January 12 to 15 for this year's Junior Target Shooting Camp. The SSAA - at club, state and national levels - puts a lot of effort into helping juniors experience recreational shooting, as it can be hard for some youngsters to arrange their first taste of the sport.

The shooters ranged from 12 to 17 years of age, with each junior holding their minor's permit. Even though the levels of knowledge with different firearms were quite varied, everyone enjoyed the opportunities the camp provided to widen their repertoire.

Over the four days the juniors were able to try their hand at Air Rifle, Benchrest, Cowboy Lever Action Silhouette Rifle and Trap shooting. The sessions were run by noted shooters in their respective disciplines, giving the juniors a chance to shoot in various competitions. The close supervision meant the juniors received the best possible coaching while testing their new-found skills against friends.

The Friday afternoon session proved one of the most popular, with the juniors able to shoot a number of different firearms including .243-calibre bolt-action rifles, .30-30 lever-action rifles, .300 Winchester Magnum bolt-action

rifles and some lever-action shotguns. Despite some sore shoulders (from the larger calibres), there were plenty of very big smiles at the end of the day.

Arguably the most popular option was the shotgun discipline. Experienced shotgun shooters Michael McNabb and Gemma Dunn, who have each represented Australia on the international stage, were more than happy to impart their know-how and skills with the camp-goers.

Other highlights included dirt-karting and The Amazing Race, a GPS orienteering team-based activity which really tested everyone's ingenuity. After a long and hard-fought race, the prize for best and fairest was taken out by the all-girl line-up known as the Blue Team.

When the participants arrived at the start of camp, only two sisters knew each other, but by the end some great friendships had been forged. Everyone left with a smile, a new appreciation for at least one shooting discipline and memories that will no doubt last a lifetime.

The organisers of the camp want to thank the many volunteers and supervisors who gave their time, shared their skills and lent out their firearms. The camp was a huge success and the plan is to come back bigger and better next time. SSAA Batemans Bay Branch was a fantastic host and deserves lots of praise for making its range and facilities available.

The organisers would also like to thank NIOA for again supplying a majority of the ammunition used by the juniors throughout. Other sponsors who deserve plaudits include Winchester, who supplied shotgun ammunition, Ryda Dot Com, who assisted with the provision of the GPS units used in The Amazing Race, and Tasco Sales Australia, who provided showbags for each junior as well as prizes.

Want to be a part of the next target shooting camp? SSAA state branches work hard to organise events like this all over the country, so let them know you are interested in participating or even willing to help organise and run similar dates.

Dirt-karting was another very popular activity at the camp.



The sessions were run by noted shooters in their respective disciplines...



Benchrest was another discipline in demand.



Hands-on guidance for shotgun shooting with Gemma Dunn.



The camp supervisors.



The campers after a hard session of shooting paper foxes.

Identifying and ageing sign

-hints for junior hunters

by Joseph Nugent

The success of a hunt depends on being able to locate the game you are seeking. At certain times of the year and in different environments, animals are highly visible, quite vocal or both. However, you still need to give yourself the advantage of being in the right spot at the right time. You need to be hunting ground where you are confident that game is regularly frequenting. To do this you need to develop skills in identifying and ageing sign.

Being able to identify and age sign is a very important and regularly used skill when hunting wild game such as deer, pigs and goats. Sign can be found in many different forms including diggings, grass beds, hair on fences and wallows. However, the most regularly seen and perhaps most useful examples of sign are droppings, tracks and rub trees. Each can give an indication of the numbers of game in an area and tell you a lot about an animal's feeding habits, movement patterns or its location relative to you.

Droppings or scat



Droppings are, in my opinion, the most useful sign encountered when stalking game animals. Droppings are widely used to determine feeding and roaming patterns. They are regularly found along game trails, in bedding areas and feeding zones. The size and frequency of the droppings can help a hunter determine the numbers or maturity of the game animal concerned, what they might be eating and the regularity with which animals are passing through a particular area. Most importantly though, the texture of the scat can be used to develop a time frame which can indicate how close an animal might be. This valuable information can be gathered by using texture to determine the age of the sign. Be prepared to get your hands dirty and look for three main things:

Is it moist? Fresh deer droppings will often be dark green and covered in a thin, sticky mucus-like film. Droppings like this suggest that the target animal was in the area very recently and potentially only minutes away. The older the droppings, the drier they are.

Is it soft? Fresh droppings will usually be soft throughout

Tracks

Found on a dam, these prints clearly show deer of different sizes and maturity in the area.

Recent print: splayed hooves indicating a mature animal.



and easy to open. Very recent sign will be 'squishy' and as a result you should be able to split the pellets by using a small stick or the edge of a gum leaf. The older the droppings, the harder their outside case.

What color is it? Droppings will fade and lose their color as they age. The freshest droppings will have a dark green exterior and a soft light green interior. These droppings can age from between mere minutes up to one hour old. Any droppings that are black, grey or white are very old and not worth inspecting the animal would have moved on many hours, days or weeks ago.

On a recent deer hunt with Dad and one of his friends, we found several mounds of moist, green droppings on a game trail and knew that we were only minutes behind some animals. Dad had us sit and wait quietly for the mist to lift and sure enough bedded 50m below us in a grassy basin was a group of three deer, one of which our friend Kent was able to harvest. Understanding what the scat was 'saying' paid off.

Game animals cannot help but leave tracks, they are a natural consequence of animal movements and a great asset to the observant hunter. Tracks can be found around dams, on creek lines, near wallows, melon holes, game trails, on road verges or in soft dirt. By examining the tracks and considering their age, you can determine the direction of travel, the speed and the number of animals moving through an area. A roaming or grazing animal's tracks will have a clean crisp shape, show an even weight distribution and the prints will be close together. A running or fleeing animal's tracks will often be slightly larger and deeper towards the front edge. Usually the prints will be slightly splayed and further apart. Tracks can also be helpful when thinking about the maturity of the animals involved. For example, the prints of a fawn or yearling are much smaller than those of an adult animal.

To identify the age of tracks you must look at two things: condition and setting.

Condition: Fresh tracks will have a sharp, well-defined look to them. They will be unaffected by wind, rain or the passage of time. They will often be free of debris such as leaves or sticks. If you locate such a track you can confidently conclude that the target animal moved through that area fairly recently. When looking at tracks around water sources, consider if there is any water in the base of the track. A recent track will contain a small amount of water in the bottom. If this water is brown and muddy this can be an indication that it is very recently made, perhaps within the hour.

Setting: The actual setting in which the tracks are found can also help a hunter. For example, if you find prints on a track or side of a dirt road, you should see if there are other prints in the vicinity and compare them to see how frequently and recently animals might be using the area. Also consider if the animal tracks are on top of, or partially obscured by the vehicle tracks or boot prints made by your hunting party as this could indicate that an animal has crossed your path since your last circuit of the hunting area. Tracks in mud are also helpful as they can be dated accurately to the last fall of rain and allow you to age the prints almost to the day.

A good example of the usefulness of reading tracks was a hunt with my dad where I bagged my first red deer. We had been following along a creek bank and noted some very fresh tracks leading into and across to the far bank. Looking closely we could even see droplets of water on some of the larger rocks. All of this sign suggested we were only minutes behind a nice-sized animal. Forewarned, we advanced slowly into a grassy basin and were well prepared to take the large doe which subsequently jumped up from her bed in front of us.

Rub trees

Many species of game animals leave their marks on trees. Feral goats will strip bark and leave a clearly defined browse line. Wild pigs can leave trees covered in mud and roughed up by their scratching, while male deer will thrash their antlers on small trees or saplings to mark their territory, strip velvet and add color to their antlers. Dad and I spend most of our time hunting red deer on our property so rub trees are a common and welcome sight.

When assessing the age of a rub tree you simply look at the condition of the rub: Is there sap on the trunk or branches? Fresh rub trees will often have a thin layer of tacky, wet sap on the exposed parts of the trunk or branches. If you locate a rub tree that still has wet sap on it, you can conclude that a stag has recently passed through the area. Of course the size and ferocity of the rub can also suggest the trophy potential of your quarry.

What color is the stripped leaves and bark? Fresh rub trees will still have subtle, green leaves and natural looking bark. If the leaves are dry and crumbly, the rub tree is very old. The amount to which the leaves and bark have dried out and died clearly ages the rub. It is a good idea to hunt the areas with higher concentrations of rub trees, as you will have a good chance of harvesting the stag claiming that area.

Just after the 2015 roar, Dad and I were walking a hillside and came across a number of seriously and ferociously rubbed trees. We were not really hunting, more



A very well-rubbed tree in close vicinity. A 10-pointer stag was located shortly afterwards.

Fresh and green: a rub from the 2015 roar.

bushwalking, but once we found these trees we went into stalking mode and within about half an hour and 250m, we were lucky enough to briefly encounter the animal we thought responsible. He was a big 10-point stag, still holding a few does. Dad did not actually see him clearly as he was hidden behind a stand of lantana. But I saw him charge off over the ridge line and could well imagine him marking his stand with the solid rack he was carrying.

Summary

There are many different forms of sign and as a hunter being able to identify and use them is a very important skill. From a single piece of sign you can determine feeding and movement patterns of an animal, its likely location relative to you, how recently it has moved through and perhaps even its sex and maturity. To succeed, hunters need every possible advantage and taking the time to consider the tell-tale signs left behind by game animals can mean the difference between bringing home the venison or just sore feet!

Starting them young



I just thought I'd send in this snap we caught of our little fella, Ned (two years old), having a read of your latest magazine. Looks like he's going to be an avid hunter and shooter just like me!

Jeremy Browne, Qld

No amount of rain could wipe the smile from participants at last year's SSAA National Junior Challenge in Batemans Bay, NSW.



Be part of the 2017 SSAA National Junior Challenge

The 2017 SSAA National Junior Challenge is set to take place from July 7 to 9 at the South Australian SSAA Para Branch. We encourage all SSAA junior members aged between 12 and 18 years of age to sign up and show us what they can do.

The National Junior Challenge is comprised of three core rimfire rifle disciplines: 3-Positional, Rifle Metallic Silhouette and Field Rifle. There will be also be a separate 10m Precision Air Rifle supplementary event, but it will not contribute to the Overall Challenge score.

There are national medals to be won for first, second and third place in the three core events, as well as overall winners in the two age groups of Under 15 and Under 18. On Saturday, there will be a trivia night held in the canteen at the range. Between the various shooting events there will be plenty of

time to socialise and for old and new friends to meet.

A number of air and rimfire rifles with scopes will be available for juniors to use. There will also be camping areas with hot showers available at the range, plus canteen facilities open each day. If camping isn't your style, accommodation packages have been negotiated with two nearby motels, with more information on the entry form.

The entry fee is \$60 per participant for all the events plus dinner on Saturday night. Participants not wanting to compete in all events can take part for \$20 per event. Nominations close on June 30, so be sure to secure your place now.

To obtain your entry form or for the full details of the event, go to ssaa.org.au/juniorsports and click on the '2017 SSAA National Junior Challenge' event. We look forward to seeing you there!

Juniors-only competition

Only junior SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on a piece of paper and mail it to us at::

May 2017 Junior competition
SSAA National
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes May 31, 2017

WIN 1 of 2 Leatherman
Monarch 6 torches



Valued at \$38.50

Kindly donated by the SSAA Store
store.ssaa.org.au

SPONSOR A JUNIOR AND WIN

SSAA National's 'Sign up a Junior' campaign was launched to help introduce youngsters to recreational shooting. Juniors are essential to the ongoing strength and vitality of the SSAA and **we are seeking your support to protect and ensure the future of the shooting sports in Australia.**

Simply fill in the form below with the junior's details and your details as the 'sponsoring member'. You can add more than one junior by photocopying the form and adding an extra \$25 per junior. As an incentive to promote the campaign, all junior members who join or renew their membership between January 1 and December 31, 2017, will go into the draw to win \$500 worth of SSAA merchandise. Additionally, all adults who sponsor a junior member will go into the draw to win \$1000 worth of SSAA merchandise!



- \$25 - includes 11 issues of the *Australian Shooter*
- \$54 - includes 11 issues of the *Australian Shooter* and 4 issues of *Australian Hunter* magazine



Has the junior been a member before? Yes/No

Membership No.

Details of junior being signed up - (must be under 18)

Branch (if known) Sex (please circle) M / F
 First name Middle name Last name
 Home address P/C.....
 Date of birth Phone.....
 Email

OFFICE USE ONLY

Details of sponsoring member:

First name Middle name..... Last name.....
 Membership No.

Payment options

I also wish to donate \$..... to the SSAA

Enclosed is payment for the amount of \$.....

Cheque Money order MasterCard Visa

Card number

Expiry date Signature.....

Cheques payable to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia

- Fees are per year unless specified and include GST.

MAIL TO: MEMBERSHIP OFFICE,
 PO BOX 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

SSAA Inc is subject to the provisions of the National Privacy Act. Should you want a copy of the SSAA Inc Privacy Statement or seek further information, please write to PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061.