

THE JUNIOR Shooter

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 23



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Editorial

Young hunter Jaqui Walker is front and centre on the cover of Issue 23 and the smile says it all after she had just taken her first chital hind. In 'Girls win the day', Jaqui describes how she and a friend stalked the deer over open ground and ultimately won the day after accepting a hunting challenge from her dad.

Joseph Nugent also had deer on his mind but put paid to a marauding wild dog during a reconnaissance mission in search of a red stag. Not to be outdone, Joseph returned later and was rewarded with a majestic 10-pointer which now has pride of place in his trophy room.

Senior correspondent John Dunn likes nothing more than getting into the great outdoors with his grandchildren and

has penned an interesting article on informing and education the next generation of Australian outdoors men and women.

In competition shooting we turn the spotlight on the friendly school rivalry between New South Wales and Queensland in a contest featuring Woodenbong Central and St Brendan's College, and put the junior winners in the 2018 Bananacoast Benchrest Centrefire Championships in the picture.

And turn to Page 14 for your chance to win a Flipping Jack .22 Reactive Steel Target valued at \$59.95 courtesy of Glowshot Targets in our juniors-only competition.

Welcome to Junior Shooter 23.

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Girls win the day

Jaqui Walker



Jaqui proud as punch with the chital hind.

I recently accompanied my dad Matt on a guided hunt with Australian Outfitters. He and his friend Murray were off to hunt chital deer and I was going along for the road trip and to spend some time with dad. We headed west for a 12-hour drive to Jericho in central Queensland and the Australian Outfitters Hotspur lodge. The lodge was where we spent the night to get a good sleep before continuing to the hunting property west of Charters Towers.

Dad and Murray went out on the first morning to hunt

the chital stags with head guide and Outfitters owner Mike Mackay, while my friend Christie and I stayed to look after the camp, do a bit of relaxing and study. After a couple of hours studying our attention spans had all but dissipated completely so we asked the property owner where a nice place to go walking would be. He asked if we would take a doe for meat for he and his family.

Dad and Murray had been unsuccessful in their chital stag mission so the next morning the pressure was on



- they needed two stags and we needed a meat deer. Dad joked before we left it was girls versus boys. "Challenge accepted!" we told him.

So I went with Christie to a spot the farmer told us he'd seen wild dog tracks and while we kept an eye out for the culprits all we found were the same tracks. I picked up a cast antler which Christie reckoned would bring us luck.

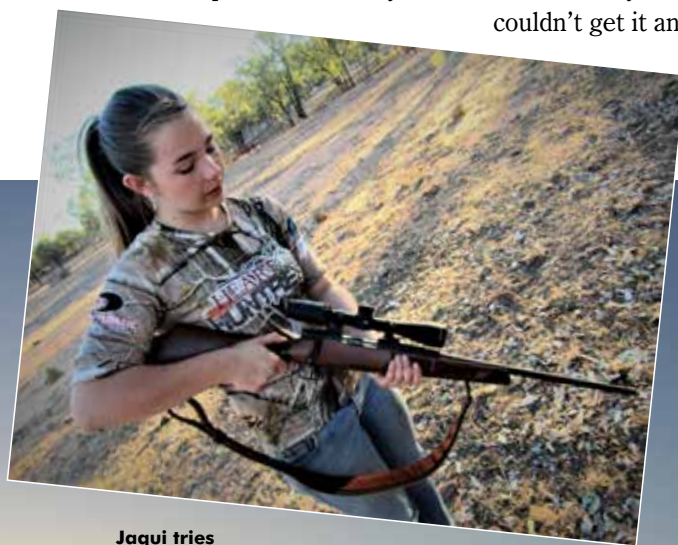
We explored an area of thick bush looking for signs of wild pigs without success before Christie spotted a herd of hinds, urging me to check them through my scope. Initially I could see three but as we got closer there were actually five. I steadied myself against a tree about 200m from the deer and, with my scope on full zoom, lined up one of the hinds. With the scope at maximum and feeling a little nervous it was hard to hold steady and I couldn't see the deer's vitals over the long grass.

Christie advised me not to take the shot until I was comfortable and, with the deer unaware of our presence, we should move closer to ensure a clear shot. We kept low and snuck to another tree about 40m from where we'd spotted

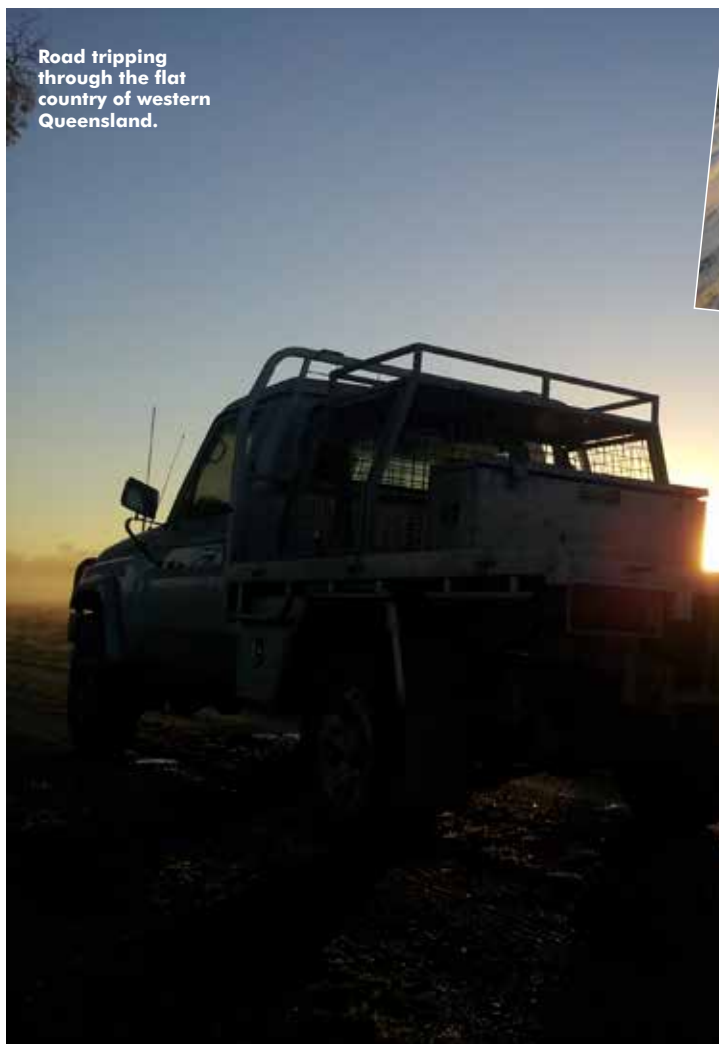
the hinds, who were still feeding but had moved a bit further away.

Now the ground was quite open, the only cover between us and the next trees being long grass, so we had to make up ground quickly which we did by crawling on all fours through the grass to the tree closer to the herd. As we reached our spot I rose to my feet and, aiming for the shoulder of my chosen prey, let out a slow breath and pulled the trigger.

The herd spooked and started running and it quickly became apparent we were in their path. I wasn't sure if I'd made a kill shot so prepared for a follow-up but before I could take the second shot I saw the hind drop. Despite the poor environmental conditions locally she was a healthy animal and I was sure she'd make good eating. Our vehicle was parked a fair way off and unfortunately we couldn't get it any



Jaqui tries out the new Weatherby Camilla ladies rifle.



Road tripping through the flat country of western Queensland.

closer to pick up the deer, so after a few photos and gutting the animal, we prepared a backpack and carried it out Kiwi-style as dad had taught me.

This was my first organised hunt and it was great experience to explore new territory. I usually hunt red deer with dad and am used to more cover so it was interesting to hunt on open flat country which made it more challenging to spot the animals without being seen - and to stalk in closely.

Chital deer are very wary, much more so than the red deer I'm used to, and as they can spot you from so far away you need to be prepared for a long shot. Christie's a bow-hunter and likes to get as close as possible to the animals before taking aim, so she was delighted when I said I'd risk another stalk to get in closer. After the hunt she was impressed at how we had stalked to within 70m in such open country, with five sets of eyes and ears to contend with.

Another highlight was listening to Mike's tales of his days as a bear and moose-hunting guide in Alaska. He has

**...it was girls
versus boys.
"Challenge
accepted!"**

experience in so many hunting scenarios and a funny story for every occasion. And it was great to be able to hang out with my dad but also to hunt independently and learn new things by hunting with someone new and learn from their styles and methods.

I enjoyed the chance to be independent as a hunter and Christie encouraged me to make my own decisions on if and when to shoot and

which animal to take. And of course carrying out my own animal and being heavily involved in its preparation - skinning, gutting then breaking it up back at camp. I took the skin to have prepared as a rug.

When we got back to camp one of the boys had shot one chital stag, stored it in the cool room and gone back out hunting. We decided to hang my deer next to it and say nothing until they went into the cool room later for a beer. And that's when they discovered to their dismay that the girls had won! ●

**Jaqui and Christie with their
chital hind.**



Winners

at the 2018 Bananacoast Benchrest Centrefire Championships



Thomas Cook emerged victorious in the junior category of the 2018 Bananacoast Benchrest Centrefire Championships at Coffs Harbour.

Alex McMillan was also among the prizes which were presented by Rod Madeley, Coffs Harbour branch president.



A young man wearing a yellow baseball cap, a blue long-sleeved shirt, and grey pants stands in a grassy field. He is holding a silver rifle with a scope. To his right is a large, weathered tree trunk. The background shows green bushes and a clear blue sky.

A tale of *deer and dogs*

Joseph Nugent

It was early November and we decided to head to one of the properties dad and I have permission to hunt on, in order to walk its furthest boundary. We'd never explored the top corner of this property and as a result a reconnaissance mission was long overdue.

After picking up our regular hunting companion, Dave, we began our hike by slowly contouring around the ridges and re-entrants. By doing this we were able to find a lot of deer signs, including some large rub trees, and spot a few lone animals. We stumbled across the bleached

bones of a young stag and at one point had to detour around a large red-bellied black snake basking on a log and while we didn't see anything too out of the ordinary, we reckoned this was a promising spot to pick up a stag during the next roar.

A practice stalk

Another of our weekend goals was to call up some wild dogs. We regularly see them when hunting deer but let them be as our preference is to take a trophy stag. Our purpose was different today and as a result we stood a good chance of removing some canine pests. However, the hunting gods had other ideas for while walking to our observation point, Dave spotted eight to 10 deer on one of the far ridges. Some were feeding but most were bedded in the short grass above a dam and we decided instead of targeting wild dogs it would be fun to stalk these animals.

We swiftly made our way to the top of the ridge, the cover and dead ground working in our favour and we were able to close the range rapidly. On the way up we encountered a few deer in a gully parallel to us. We ignored them and after about 20 minutes were in position to glass the area we'd last seen the deer. They were no longer visible.

Dave and I stayed on the ridge top as observers while dad walked the area we'd last seen the herd, in an attempt to flush them out. As dad climbed higher the animals in front of Dave and I picked up his scent. They sprang to life and after about 30 seconds the gully erupted. There were actually a further seven deer deeper in the gully as this was where the herd had relocated to during our stalk. They cantered out of the gully and in typical red deer fashion stopped to look back at us, all 10 standing motionless under a tree, eyeballing us from about 100m before trotting off out of sight.

An answering howl

We decided to head for home and soon found ourselves facing a mini stampede as a herd of cattle came running down the hill towards us. To divert them Dave let out a howl which did the trick as the cattle angled away from us but, more importantly, we received a reply to Dave's holler - there was a dog about!

Dave called again. There was another answering yell as a half-grown wild dog stepped out of the scrub. I raised my Tikka T3 .223, centered the sights on his chest and squeezed off a shot, the 55gr hollow-point projectile doing an exceptional job by dropping him in his tracks.

The removal of a wild dog was a good way to end an enjoyable weekend in the bush. By taking out ferals from hunting properties we're able to do the farmers a good turn, save native wildlife and improve the chance of survival for the fawns, thereby ensuring the viability of the herd we hunt. Our two-day reconnaissance mission had

...had to detour
around a large red-
bellied black snake
basking on a log.





Exploring new hunting grounds.

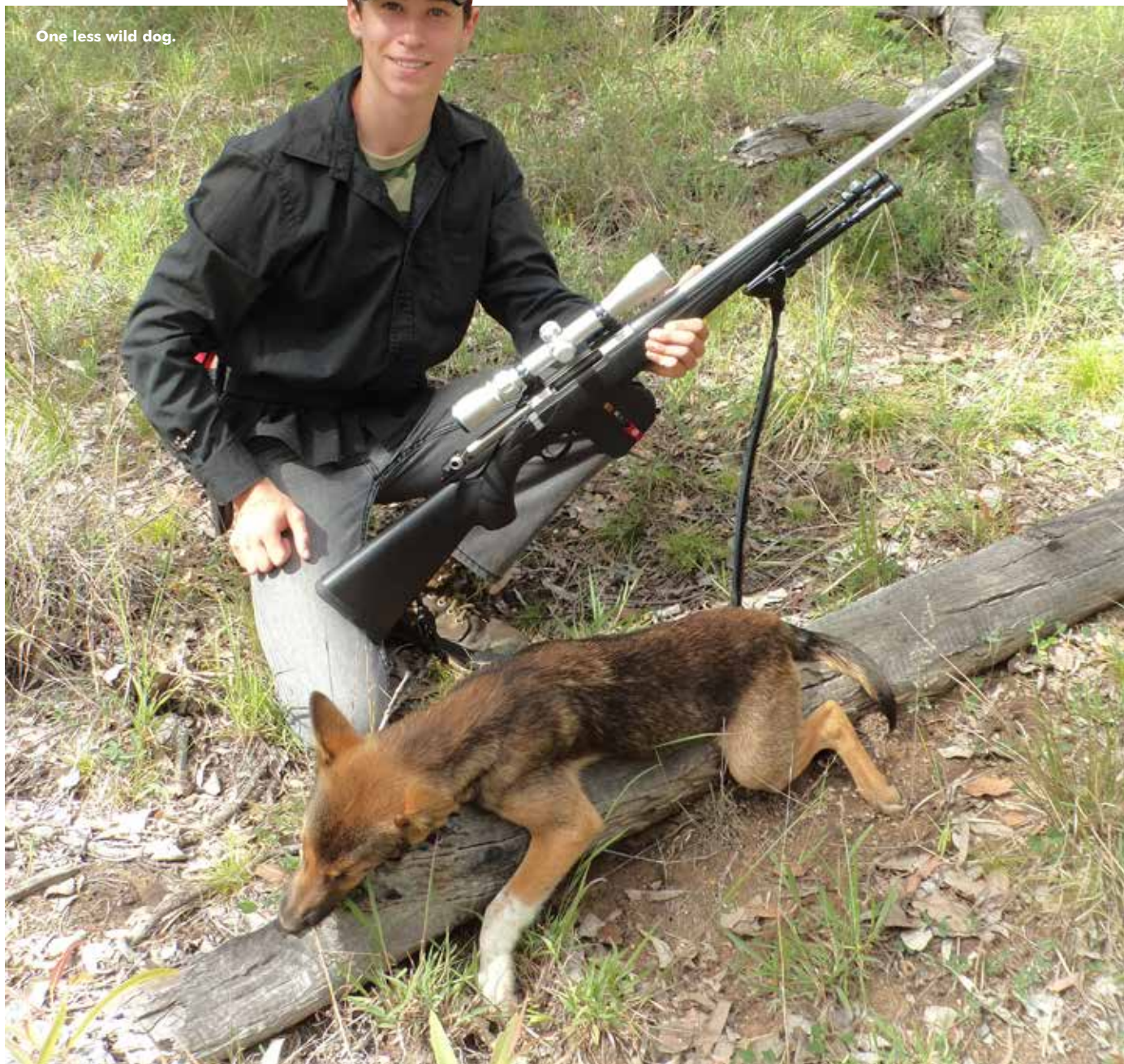
achieved its aims as we'd identified some prime sites to hunt during the roar and scored a dog into the bargain.

Surrounded

Fast-forward several months and with the roar approaching we set aside a weekend towards the end of March to check the trail cameras on our property. The results were promising as all four showed significant deer numbers, in particular a valley containing two wallows showing itself to be a hive of activity. This small valley seemed to hold deer, mostly stags, all hours of the day and night. Also many of the partly cleared ridge tops and game trails

were dotted with rub trees, another good sign in the lead up to the roar.

But trail camera photos and rub trees weren't the only signs that this roar could be a productive one. Around 9pm several stags began to roar off in the distance in a particular pattern. They'd roar and moan briefly to each other for about 15 minutes and then nothing for an hour, repeating the pattern all night, and appeared to be coming closer with each passing hour. At 2.30am a tremendous roar woke me. Dad was already awake and explained there were four stags roaring within 100m of our shed, one of them only 40m or so from the back door. At that point the nearest stag let out another roar which was immediately answered.



Keen to take a closer look we ventured outside and could hear one walking through the undergrowth, bashing his antlers and groaning. We stalked down the gully to about 20m from the deer before trying to pinpoint him by torch. Unfortunately he'd set up behind some thick scrub and though we never managed a good look at him, our encounter with a group of stags roaring so close to camp that early in the season was encouraging.

Big red

We headed back to the property in the second week of April in search of a trophy stag. After arriving late in the afternoon we set out for a session above the dam, glassing for deer on the adjacent ridge system. We spotted a six-point stag with three does about 400m across the valley, grazing sedately and eventually disappearing into the trees. The next day we decided our best plan would be to walk on to the ridge we had glassed and listen for any stags in the area.

Dawn saw us in position on the highest point of the ridge system from where we could hear four stags roaring at each other regularly in the distance. Fortunately, the loudest roars were coming from timbered country about 300m to our right and it seemed there was a lone stag set up on a knoll surrounded by trees. As he was both the loudest and closest we decided he was our best bet and after negotiating a small creekline we made our way up the ridge and into the trees. As we crested the ridge I could see him in the trees to our left. I couldn't count his points but could see his antlers were tall, wide and dark with royal tines on each.

I quietly cycled my Tikka T3X chambered in .270 and brought it to my shoulder. Steadying my rifle I placed the cross-hairs on his chest and squeezed off a shot. The shot was around 150m but the Nosler 130gr ballistic tip projectile performed well. He'd clearly been hit hard as he took only a few steps back and forth before dropping. Dad and I approached the downed stag and with every step the quality of his rack became more apparent. Upon inspection the stag was revealed to be a solid 5x5, a little asymmetrical but a true trophy at last and prepared as a European mount he now has pride of place in the trophy room.

Overall, our Easter hunts were a great success. We encountered more than 40 deer including 13 stags all of whom were six points or better. Dad even had one deer decide to bed behind him in the stand of trees he was using to observe Dave and I stalk a roaring eight-pointer and his girls. Now I've taken a mature stag with my rifle my next goal is to take a deer with my bow, a task proving a real challenge but an excellent way to further hone my stalking techniques. ●



The smile says it all.



Carrying out the spoils of the hunt.

Taking our message to a *new generation*

John Dunn



Poppy John explains the deer signs in the paddock.

Ever since they could walk and talk and ask questions my grandchildren have known Poppy John is a hunter. When the Canberra pair come to stay during school holidays we usually go for a rabbit hunt, something they look forward to and ask about.

Like all kids they have a natural interest in animals that isn't limited to cute and furry natives. For some time now we've talked about introduced animals and the need to control their numbers so their impact on the environment and the hard work of farmers is kept to a minimum where possible.

During one visit we took them to meet Sammy, an orphaned sambar calf being raised as a pet by friends of

mine. Not surprisingly the kids loved her. She's an intriguing little creature, very much at home with her human family. She enjoys the company of other animals including a dog, cat and the neighbours' sheep but given the option she'd rather be with people. She's completely guileless, calmly greeting everyone who arrives at the house, apparently enjoying the attention she receives.

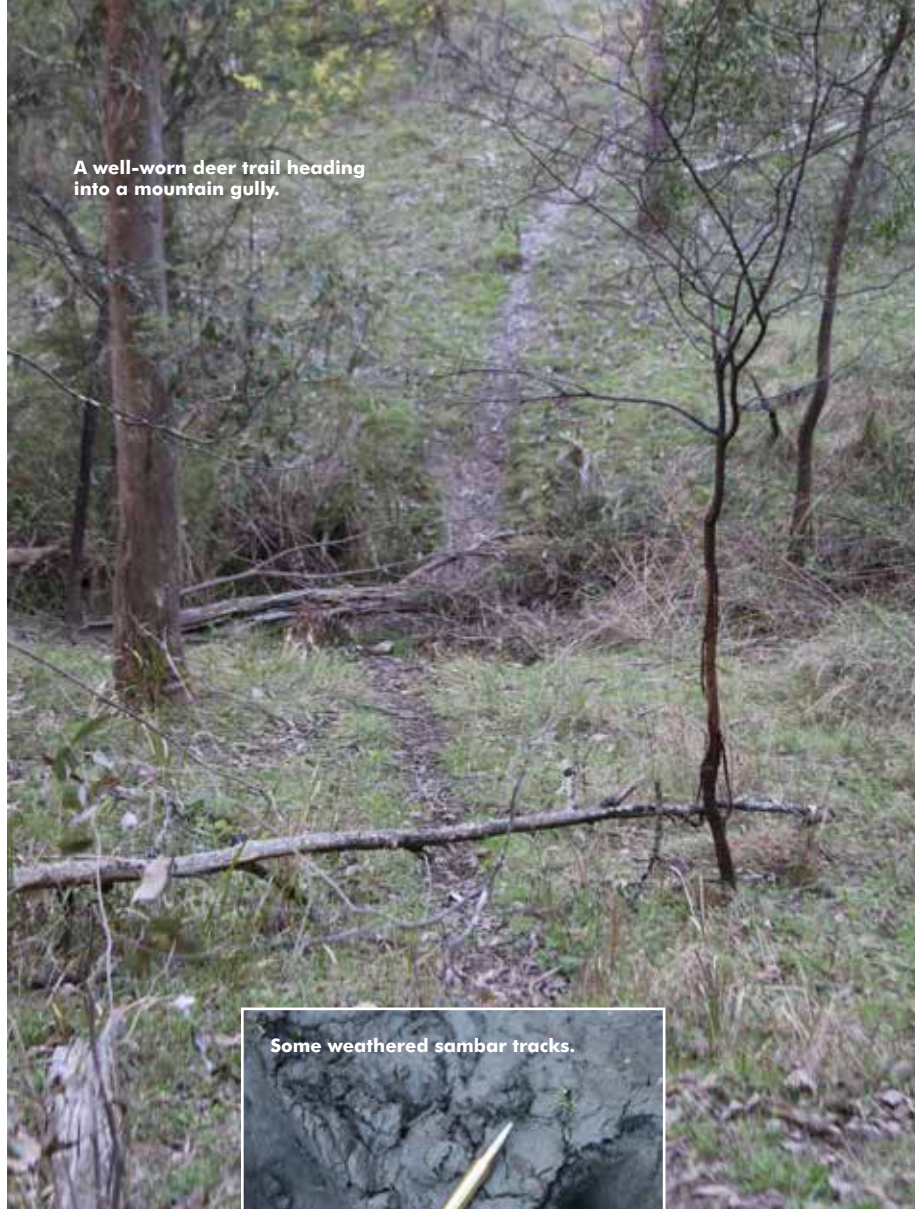
The day after Sammy we packed our gear and went to stay at the hut for a few days, a special place on the edge of the mountains I've been escaping to for the past 20 years. With two grandchildren to entertain for a week it seemed a good place to be. The fishing season had been open for a few weeks

and though it was late in the year, there were still a few deer about. The chance to mix two of my favourite pastimes with two of my favourite people and their grandmother was too good to miss.

The kids' initial excitement about the fishing didn't last long, it was too sedentary. The little bloke isn't noted for his ability to sit still for long and his big sister isn't much better. They're outdoor kids who like to be up and moving, especially when there are new places to explore. The first morning we went for a walk in some country up the river I hadn't looked at for a while. If there were deer about that's where we'd find some signs to teach the kids a bit more about the way that Sammy's



A rub tree smeared with mud from a nearby wallow.



A well-worn deer trail heading into a mountain gully.



Some weathered sambar tracks.

wild relatives use the country they live in.

The first sign were some old marks around a cattle feeder on the edge of a cultivation paddock - nothing to get excited about but enough to show them what I was looking for. There were more on the track and on a game trail leading into a couple of wallows in the bottom of a soak fed gully. One showed evidence of recent use - an impressed pattern of coarse hair in the mud where a stag had laid down and rolled about, together with some gouge marks where a stag had raked his antlers through the muck. All of it had been rained on and that made the sign at least a day old, probably a bit longer.

Along the edge of the paddock a

lot of the scrub had been antler thrashed, some of it quite recently as the leaves on the shattered limbs hadn't begun to dry out and shrivel. A few metres into the bush we found a rub tree with its trunk plastered in mud.

In the paddock the long grass was randomly furrowed by the low-slung belly ramblings of wombats, the lay of the grass clearly indicating their direction of travel. Over the top of the wombat sign were the lighter, more deliberate travel marks of deer that had fed from one patch of clover to another. Five flattened areas in the

middle of the paddock showed that somewhere during the night some of them had laid down to rest, literally up

to their ears in lush green feed.

They'd left the paddock early, leaving a clear trail to follow through the wet grass as they headed for the river. The game trails leading down to the water were pocked with the marks of assorted deer - tracks over tracks that clearly recorded a history of regular traffic, as did scattered piles of dropping of varying ages.

We spent half an hour or more wandering around - the kids asking questions, the dog sniff testing everything

she found. Neither of the kids complained about being bored and when we went back to the hut for lunch I had a pretty good idea about how I was going to spend the last part of the afternoon.

As the evening settled down I sat and waited over a corner of the paddock, hoping a hungry sambar might wander out of the forest for an early feed. It wasn't to be but half an hour before dark the dog growled softly and pointed a young fallow buck walking down the paddock behind us. When he stopped I shot him and there was meat for the freezer.

The following morning I was out of bed before daylight. I couldn't see any animals on the cultivation paddock when I arrived so I began checking the bush line with my binoculars to see if there were any standing in the shadows.

Sitting beside me Dixie woofed as a deer ambled out from behind the head of a nearby tree that obstructed the view across part of the paddock. There's no mistaking the bulk and body shape of a mature sambar stag. As he walked across the open country, grabbing a mouthful of clover here and there, I stripped off my day pack and lay down in the grass, using the pack as a makeshift rest.

The stag was about 160m away when I shot him, poking a 150gr Outer Edge .308 copper hollow point bullet behind the last rib on his left hand side, angling it through his chest towards the shoulder on the off side. Though I heard the bullet connect the stag didn't react. He walked another 40m before he stopped and dropped his head, rocking on his feet and obviously in trouble. I shot him again as he stood there, putting the outcome beyond doubt.

He was still quivering a little when we reached him, lying on his side in the lush grass that had drawn him out of the bush. With Dixie whining nervously we sat off the stag until all his movements had ceased. Only then did the dog move closer, walking around him a couple of times before creeping up for a final sniff test.

The stag was her second deer in a little over 12 hours. More importantly it was her first sambar deer on the



Annika with Sammy, the pet sambar fawn.

ground, something we'd been working towards since she came to live with us as a pup in mid-2017. I fussed over her a little, rubbing her head and ears, patting her ribs and telling her she was a good girl. She wasn't about to disagree.

The stag was an old boy, the pedicles under his antlers short and close to his skull. The antlers were quite large around the coronets but fell away in weight towards the tops. When I checked his mouth his upper teeth were worn down almost level with his gums, his ears tattered and his face scarred. There was a scabbed-over hole in the side of his neck and numerous antler marks on his shoulders.

Despite his rotund belly the angulations of his hips and spine showed through his hide as high points. He looked like he'd done it tough during the recent rut and was in the process of building himself up again, perhaps the reason he'd lingered in the paddock a little longer than he normally would. Now it didn't matter.

Sometime later when the sun was properly up and the frost had melted we took the kids down and showed them the deer, closing the circle that had begun with a pet calf. Like the dog, they were impressed by the size of the animal. We talked about why I'd shot him and what I was going to do

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:

April 2019 Junior competition

SSAA National

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes April 30, 2019



**Glowshot Flipping
Jack .22 Reactive
Steel Target**

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glowshottargets.com.au

with him, how his meat would feed the dog and I for months. The little bloke liked that idea.

A few days earlier he'd asked why I shoot God's creatures - a forthright question that came out of nowhere and demanded an honest answer. The stag on the ground supported the reply I'd given him and for the second time that morning helped to educate a youngster with an active interest in hunting.

When Grandma had taken the necessary photos I drove her and the kids back to the hut then returned to the deer. Fishing my knives and a diamond steel out of the daypack I began the process of breaking him down into manageable portions for the cool room, morally obliged to use as much of him as I possibly could.

That had been a key plank in my own education when I was a kid learning to hunt and fish with my father. Out of respect for him and the deer whose life I'd taken, it was the only thing I could do. ●



Mikah reckoned the stag was much bigger than a rabbit.

Youth the winner in inter-school contest



S SAA Rockhampton's Cawarral range was the venue late last year for the first interstate school shooting competition between St Brendan's College of Queensland and Woodenbong Central School of New South Wales.

Despite the two schools normally shooting different shotgun disciplines the day was a resounding success and while Woodenbong took home the shield, the real winners were the young shooters who got to compete against their peers from across the border.

The formal competition was the five-stand shoot with a rimfire rifle contest shot for fun and prizes awarded to the top three scorers.

Woodenbong has a down-the-line shotgun club while St Brendan's, affiliated to SSAA Rockhampton, shoots five-stand shotgun and field rifle, and the day was set up so both ranges could work concurrently.

St Brendan's shooting coordinator Peter Hayes said: "Competition is the glue that binds interest and skill to generate improvement, and this was abundant in spades as all the students got into the spirit and displayed excellent sportsmanship.

"On behalf of St Brendan's I'd like to thank the SSAA Rockhampton committee, range officers and members for their support on the day and also John Lee, the students and parents from Woodenbong for their help and sportsmanship."

Sponsor a JUNIOR



Photo: Nicholas Loakim

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.

☐ \$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.

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Card number

Expiry date Signature.....

Cheques payable to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc.

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