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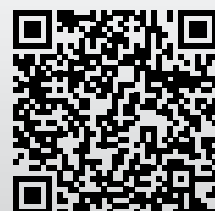


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The year 2024 is set to be a big one for SSAA publications, competitions and in the political arena across the country. As our state and territory membership numbers continue to grow beyond 215,000, the SSAA is truly Australia's premier body representing firearm owners, hunting and the shooting sports.

The monthly *Australian Shooter* continues to be provided to all members either in print or digitally depending on your preference, while the wide range of SSAA disciplines are back in full swing after the Covid-19 pandemic virtually closed competitions on home soil and across the globe overnight. Indeed this year we'll have an opportunity to watch the best shooters in Australia compete at the 2024 Paris Olympics, with selection starting soon for those hopeful contenders.

Australian Hunter magazine's quarterly issues for 2024 kick-off in March and are available to members for just \$34 delivered. Later this year we can look forward to the next edition of Australia's magazine of destination, exploration and conservation, *Great Australian Outdoors*. This is a very useful vehicle for spreading our message to the wider public about hunting as a conservation and environmental management tool. *Great Australian Outdoors* is now approaching its fifth edition, with many of the past issues proving so successful they've sold out. It has also been recognised with awards and commendations both in Australia and around the world.

The *Australian & New Zealand Handgun* magazine Edition 22 was released in December and the next one is planned for later this year. This dedicated magazine for handgun enthusiasts is released annually and available now at \$13.95 to members.

On the political front, the National Firearms Register development is expected to get under way this year, as well as upgrades to state and territory firearms registries to allow their systems to integrate. SSAA Inc is in regular contact with the relevant departments and federal agencies and is primed to be involved in the ongoing development of this project as a key stakeholder.

Some state and territory SSAA associations will also face some political advocacy and lobbying challenges this year, the most significant likely to be in the west where the Western Australian Government is set to table a draft Firearms Act early this year. This follows two years of commentary from the majority Labor government making it very clear they'd rather target law-abiding firearm owners with increased regulations than address the root cause of illegal firearm use and crime in society.

All the SSAA Inc activities, publications and major competition information can be found on the website via www.ssaa.org.au and your relevant state or territory website is the place to go for local updates.



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A good deal all round

I'VE JUST DEALT with the SSAA Insurance Brokers and Luke McCarthy, in particular, and was impressed by the efficient service and insurance options offered. The final outcome was a saving of more than \$1500 for policies covering home and contents and two motor vehicles (with improved cover on all items), as well as a broker who'll look after my requirements in the future.

If any member or their friends are looking for insurance I recommend checking out SSAA Insurance Brokers first, not only for their benefit but for the financial strength of the Association to defend our priveledges.

Les Pratten, via email

Pistol shooting just too hard

I WRITE REGARDING the SSAA Legislative Action article 'Handgun law changes 20 years on' (*Shooter*, June 2023). I've long wanted to try pistol shooting and have looked into the logistics of pistol ownership, yet the simple truth is ownership has been made so difficult and time consuming the juice isn't worth the squeeze. Of course this is a deliberate government-planned outcome, which is very disappointing for many shooters like myself who do our best to do the right thing by the sport and the community.

One would have thought a responsible Category A and B sporting shooter with a track record of good behaviour wouldn't have to jump through these hoops to enter pistol shooting. Instead we have irrational laws and regulations stopping participation in what would likely be a thriving recreational sport. Sad.

Matthew Dundules, via email

In memory of Phil

AFTER READING LIONEL Swift's articles on old Melbourne gun shops (*Shooter*, March-April 2023) I remembered an Alcock & Pierce catalogue I have which came from the estate of the late Phil Fergus, a member of Maryborough Gun Club in Victoria. Phil was also a member of the now-closed Metropolitan Gun Club in Epping and while the club was operating in Flemington from memory.

He was a wonderful guy and great asset to the club, always helping out even though he hadn't done any shooting for many years due to arthritis. I believe Lionel may have known Phil, having also been a shooter at Epping (I bought my first reloading press from Lionel about 25 years ago).

I'm sure Phil would have had many more old treasures but don't know what became of them. My father was given this catalogue by a family member while helping with a clean-up and it holds a special place in my collection of odd shooting items, as I

really liked and respected Phil and enjoyed many days at the range chatting with him. I've included a couple of pictures from the catalogue which is from 1929.

Matthew Rafferty, Vic



It's in the bag

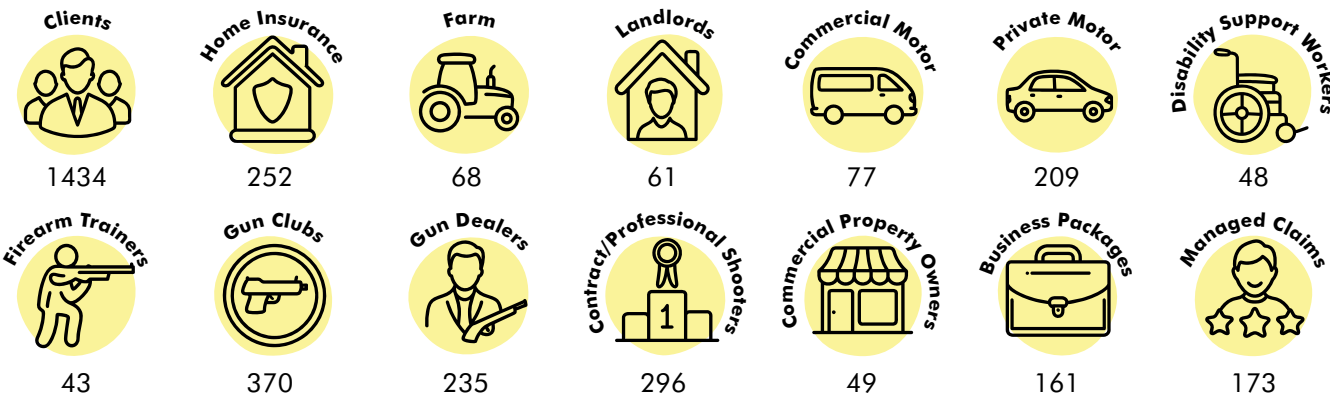
FURTHER TO THE article by Scott Heiman on bushcraft skills and the various uses for a goon bag (*Shooter*, August 2023), can I add that spring water from the supermarket in boxes have great goon bags without the residual wine taste. I also freeze them in the box when heading out for a few days, ditching the cardboard after it's frozen, so what you have is a five or 10kg block of ice in a nice square shape. It's also in a container so doesn't fill your tropical box with water as it melts. Speaking of which, ice-cold water is fantastic in summer.

Nathan, via email

2023 REVIEW

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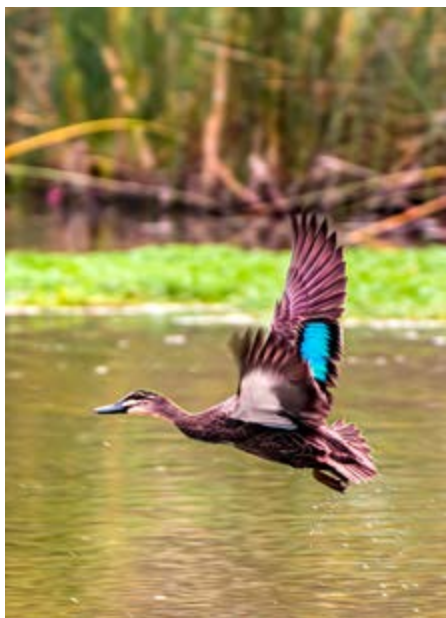


The advice offered in this column is of a general nature and does not allow for individual situations. SSAAIB recommends that you obtain professional advice before proceeding with any insurance investment. SSAAIB accepts no liability for any actions by an individual to change their insurance plans without seeking professional advice.

Calling the shots: Landmark victory for SA bird-hunting

It was a battle of David and Goliath proportions but facts and science have won the day for South Australian hunters and a sustainable native bird harvest. The knockout blow came via 11 recommendations from the State Government's review of native bird-hunting in SA. The fallout since the release of *Report of the Select Committee on Hunting Native Birds* back in December has given the green light for gamebird hunting in the state to continue.

But true to form the Greens and RSPCA are refusing to accept the umpire's decision. The outcome was clear-cut when it came to sustainable gamebird numbers and a managed harvest by hunters and while there are some interesting recommendations to work through, the important thing is people will still be able to choose to hunt duck and quail in SA during open seasons.



The hunting community's efforts, including those of individuals and collective impact of members of the Conservation and Hunting Alliance of South Australia (CHASA) which includes the SSAA, is to be commended. Facts and science have won the day but we haven't won the war yet. The hunting community will have to work hard to help the government refine and then implement the recommendations to alleviate community concerns around animal welfare.

Many of those concerns are the result of inaccurate information and unsubstantiated claims by animal rights groups. Tweaks to the code of practice and hunter education will hopefully enable the wider community to continue providing hunters with their social licence to operate.

After all, the sourcing of clean and healthy free-range food is something any Australian - first, new or old - should have the right to do.

In summary the Committee had 11 recommendations starting with one stating the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water retains the provision within the *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1972* which allows for native bird-hunting. This is the main victory. All other recommendations follow in short version. The committee recommended hunters wear an identity tag when hunting on Crown land and the department work with stakeholders on the implementation of that. There will be a two-year transition period with a review in five years.

It's further recommended animal welfare becomes a Term of Reference for the stakeholder group which advises the Minister. The *Code of Practice for the Humane Destruction of Birds by Shooting in South Australia* should be reviewed and there are clear defi-

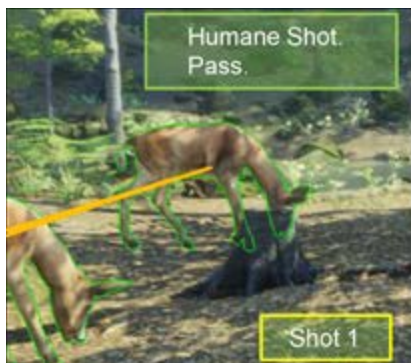
nitions of acceptable methods to kill birds (in particularly wounded ones). This Code must be provided to all permit holders.

It's also recommended breaches of the Act attract more serious penalties, which include up to two-year permit suspensions, all permit holders be members of shooting organisations and first-time permit holders must be accompanied by experienced holders appointed by a shooting organisation.

There should be a system to report birds shot and recovered, preferencing of SA residents when issuing permits, and increased funding to the environment department to have appropriate resourcing for compliance and observing open seasons, marshalls be appointed by shooting organisations to assist shooters on Crown land and a ban on all lead shot for native bird-hunting.

As I said earlier, there are some interesting recommendations to be worked through here. It might be necessary to make adjustments to enable the majority of these to become workable but the main thing is gamebird hunting in SA is to continue with only the yearly season-setting issues being an ongoing cause of frustration.

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Do you have what it takes to survive?

Hunters, hikers, fishers and many other people engaged in outdoor activities understand the importance of packing light. Depending on circumstances we want to pack enough to get us by until we return to camp, the car or even back home. But what does it mean to 'pack enough'? The answer depends on potential risks involved if things don't go to plan as well as on pre-existing individual outdoor skills. That's because, before we head out we should always consider 'what if', specifically in a worst-case scenario, will we have sufficient knowledge and experience to respond using what we're actually carrying or can acquire from our surroundings?

In the world of survival there are a plethora of acronyms to help us remember what to do to stay alive when pudding turns to poop. These prompts are invariably supported by a set of fundamental principles and priorities for survival known as Protection, Rescue, Water, Food. The mnemonic associated with these principles is 'Please Remember What's First' and the acronym is P.R.W.F.

These principles - and in that order - are the basis upon which to prioritise your survival needs in an emergency situation. Depending on circumstances, some priorities can be achieved concurrently but only

if the sequence is not jeopardised. In the course of my next few columns we'll take some time to drill down into each of these principles, in order of priority, to help you better prepare for the unexpected. So let's start at the start.

Protection: From rain, sun, wind, danger, animals, hypothermia, hyperthermia, infection, disease, etc. If a member of your party is injured, first-aid is your first priority. After all, it's a sobering reality that a person can die from a serious injury within three minutes. So you should always carry essential first-aid items when you're out bush and always know when and how to use them.

So ask yourself: Am I first-aid trained and if not then why not? If you're relying on your hunting buddy to help out, what happens if they're the one injured? If you undertook a first-aid course 'way back in the day' have you refreshed yourself on contemporary practices? Do you remember how to conduct CPR and know why DRABC is now DRSABCD? How long has it been since you considered the difference between the symptoms of heat injuries and those associated with envenomation? How would you manage a sucking chest wound, remembering the life of a loved one - or even your own - depends on your ability to respond appropriately.

After this comes clothing. Humans aren't 'designed' to withstand anything more than mild fluctuation in temperatures so clothing is your first layer of protection from the elements. A wise choice in clothing reduces the amount of moisture loss, creates a thermal barrier and also protects you from insect bites.

Shelter is your second line of defence from the elements be it man-made, improvised, indigenous or natural (such as a cave or rock ledge). Shelter is essential in all environments to protect you from heat, cold, rain and wind, not to mention insects and other animals. And just because Australia lacks big predators like bears, lions and tigers doesn't mean we should be complacent on this last point. Consider, for example, the potential threat posed by a pack of feral dogs or pigs preying on your fatigued, dehydrated and/or wounded self.

The last element of the priority of Protection is fire which actually complements all the priorities of survival. It value-adds to your health and first-aid as it allows you to boil water for drinking and washing wounds. It provides you with warmth as well as protection from insects and animals because it generates smoke, flame and ash. The heat emitted by fire can also dry clothes, cook food and provide light to help you work on other tasks at night. Importantly, fire helps boost your morale by providing warmth and a flickering flame. The feeling of safety generated by a fire enables and encourages you to do the next thing right and this psychological benefit shouldn't be overlooked because, if you lose the will to survive, you lose the battle for survival altogether.

It follows from all this that what you actually 'need' to carry on your person (pockets, belt gear or backpack) are those items which directly support your ability to achieve the priorities of survival. In the next column we'll take a closer look at the next priority: Rescue. In the meantime, isn't it time you audited your gear and asked yourself some serious questions? As a starter: Could you achieve the survival priority of Protection in all its elements if your life depended on it?





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Q I love all forms of shooting whether rifle, pistol or shotgun and guess I'd have what could be described as a reasonable level of ability at each, though I'm really not a master of any. Shotgun intrigues me as I just seem to miss for no reason at all. I shoot either Sporting Clays or Trap and can hit 10 targets in a row then miss the next 10. I've no clue why but am told my concentration level needs a lot of work (I have the same issue when hunting). I've seen videos you've made regarding a 'pre-shot routine' so is this something that can be applied at all levels of shotgun shooting?

Rohan Douglas, Vic.

A In all forms of shooting - and I assume in all sporting disciplines - what you think about in the few seconds before you perform the required task regardless if that involves pulling a trigger, kicking a ball, pulling an oar through the water or whatever, will largely determine the outcome of the action. Your brain needs to be set in motion prior to that required action so your eyes, muscles and reflexes can automatically carry out their designated function.

On a shotgun shooting range a pre-shot routine is a relatively simple task to perform and many of the great competitors do this without even knowing they're doing it. In an event like Sporting Clays where each stand requires different physical movements of the shotgun to break a target, the same pre-shot routine should be applied each time. Before the shotgun is closed you want to have visualised that point in the sky where you'll identify your target, how far you'll track it with your barrel and finally the sight picture you wish to see as you pull the trigger.

Hopefully that pre-shot routine will be the same every single time no matter the difficulty of the target or stage of competition you're in. Many competitors fail under pressure because they rush their pre-shot routine and the mechanics of their technique fall apart from that point onwards. How many times have we seen a shooter miss their last target in a round because they're more focused on the score rather than going through the same process as the previous 24 shots to achieve their desired score out of 25?

In a strictly regimented shooting event like Trap where six competitors are taking turns to shoot every 30 to 40 seconds, a very strict and tightly controlled pre-shot routine is easy to develop. As a general rule that routine would start when the person on your left is preparing to shoot. The difference with Trap is you can't actually visualise where you intend on breaking the target as you won't know exactly what direction your target is going. This is where too much visualisation can be dangerous, as you never want to pre-empt the flight path of an unknown target, though the gun-mount and time taken before calling for the target to be released should never change.

Many great Trap shooters call for the target to be released so consistently in time from when the previous competitor has shot at theirs, you could set your stopwatch by it. If you study the top tennis players or golfers, you'll see them religiously bounce the ball the same number of times before they serve or take the same amount of practice swings every single time. This is no coincidence - it's their pre-shot routine.

Obviously if you're walking through a quail paddock or standing in the middle of a

swamp covered in camouflage waiting for a duck to fly over your head, you won't have the chance to apply the same highly orchestrated pre-shot routine. The mechanics required to actually bring down your game won't be any different than those needed to shoot a clay target, and this is where some dry-firing training at home in your garage or living room will be tremendously beneficial. You can still visualise that duck or quail, you just won't have the same time to prepare. In a nutshell, dry-firing is preparing you to not have any time to prepare! I hope this helps and good luck.



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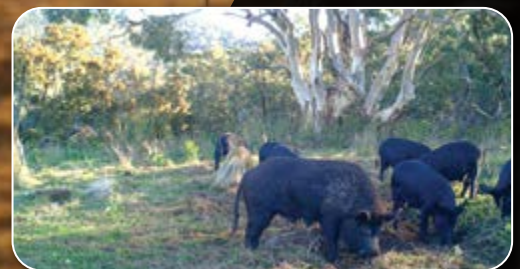


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Got a question - ask our **TOP SHOTS?**

John Dunn • Paul Miller • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

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Q On a recent hunting trip my mates and I had a long discussion about what was the best knife for our needs. We mostly hunt small game like rabbits and foxes but are starting to get into goat hunting too, and each of us has different ideas about what knife is best for the different jobs. Some of us have folding knives, others have ones with fixed blades, which I reckon are too big. Are there any general guidelines about choosing the right knife for the job?

James, via email

A In short the answer is 'no'. I was taught you only need a small knife for small jobs and a bigger one for all the others. A good folding knife is more than adequate for rabbits and foxes and at a pinch will do the job on larger game, though it may take a bit longer. A larger fixed-blade makes the job easier but is awkward to use on the smaller stuff so you need to choose between having a different knife for each job or finding some kind of compromise.

For me that means two knives in my daypack: a two-blade Uncle Henry folder I bought in 1976 and a Finnish-made puukko

that's been around for at least 20 years. Both have 100mm blades and have skinned and dressed everything from rabbits to sambar deer. Both fit my hand and work well, though of course that may not be the case for other hunters.

My advice would be to look around for something you think you like, buy and try it and if it doesn't work, put it aside and try something else. The worst that can happen is you'll finish up with a knife collection and that's no bad thing.

John Dunn

Q I've just discovered 5-Stand and Sporting Clays and haven't had so much fun in years. I'm shooting too many rounds but what the heck! Can one of the team tell me the best combination of screw-in or fixed chokes for Sporting Clays?

Nick W, NSW

A I've had this problem for years and it explains the rapid worldwide growth of Sporting Clays. It's the combination of so many different directions, speeds and size of clays that makes it so challenging and fun. Some of the best shots in the world use full and full. True. This puts a premium on knowing both the lead needed but also the

line of the target - ie, the flight path the bird is actually taking - as if you're off much at all on the line with these tight chokes you'll miss. These exceptional shots fire tens of thousands of sponsored shells a year and often coach or have their own shooting schools in the UK and US. Their shells are usually premium off-the-shelf factory loads and are high performance in every way.

Watching these shooters compete at the highest level is pretty amazing. One former world champion, Ed Solomons of England, says in online videos he shoots $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$ constrictions, which is about five per cent more pellets in a 30" circle at 40 yards than $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ chokes. These are what I use in club competitions and $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ chokes in big events or national championships. You can see this is just half a choke more than Ed uses for everything.

So the answer for mere mortals is experimentation is needed to find what best suits you, your gun and ammunition and what ultimately gives you confidence. That's the critical part. As your experience with lead and particularly line of target grows you can afford to tighten up a little. I just use 28 grams of 7.5s nowadays and there's not a clay target thrown within the practical range of a quality shotshell that can't be well broken with half choke.

Drat! Seems I'm going to have to buy two more chokes in $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$ and hit the pattern board then the clays. My bet is Ed Solomons has got it right and I'll have more fun experimenting and fine-tuning my patterns.

Paul Miller

Q At our gun club over the past few months I've heard a lot of talk about the 6.5mm rifle cartridge. Why is there so much interest in it at the moment?

Bill, via email

A The 6.5mm cartridge has gained great popularity due to its versatile performance across several shooting disciplines. 6.5mm projectiles have high ballistic coefficients, giving them excellent long range



John always carries two knives in his daypack.

accuracy and small wind drift which make them ideal for precision long range target shooting and hunting.

Shooters can also enjoy using a rifle which has mild recoil compared to larger cartridges, while retaining sufficient energy and penetration for use on medium to larger game. The wide range of 6.5mm bullets and rifles chambered for the cartridge further adds to its popularity and shooters can choose from a healthy selection of bullet designs and weights to use for either target shooting or hunting.

Barry Wilmot

Q I came across this 12-gauge slug, the likes of which I haven't seen before. It weighs 514-grains and came out of what I believe was a hand-loaded cartridge as opposed to a factory produced round because the case was stamped Peters 7½. I'm assuming this refers to the manufacturer Remington Peters and 7½ being the original shot size of the cartridge before it was reloaded. I'd be interested to know where it was made and by whom.

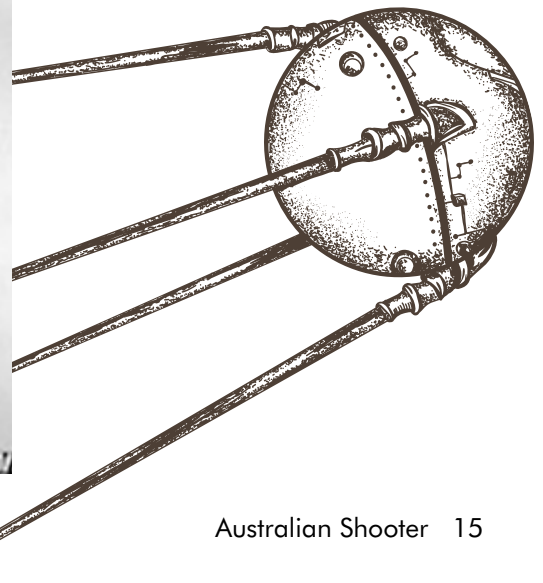
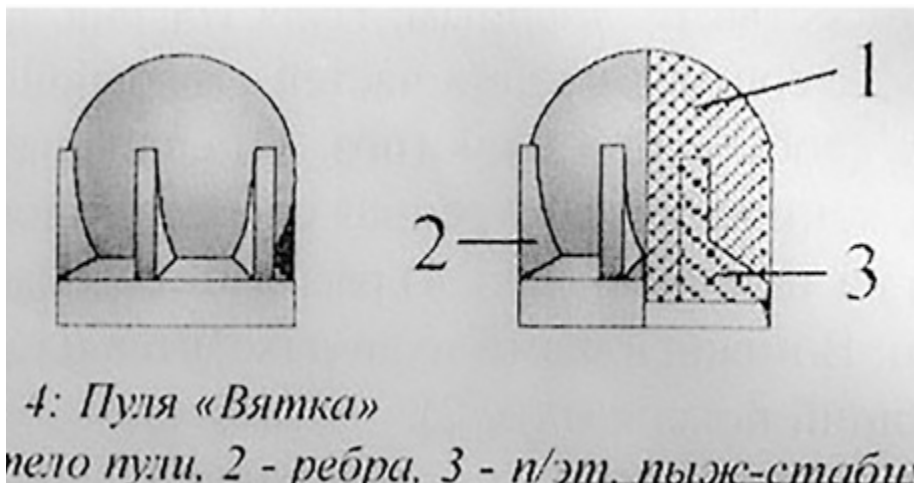
Shane, via email

A This, as you say, is an interesting item but what's also interesting to me is how you came by it. My research points to it originating in Russia during the Soviet era, around the 1960s or '70s and was nicknamed 'Sputnik' by some due to its similarity to the satellite launched by the Soviets in 1957. The orange wad is attached to the ball by an extrusion of soft lead poked through a hole in the wad then peened over to form a rivet.

The inside of the integral wad or power piston is embossed with 'K12' meaning (in Russian) it's for 12-gauge cartridges and next to this is its price, '20K' or 20 Kopeks which suggests to me it was for commercial consumption rather than military. Apparently shotguns were a favourite hunting firearm in Russia at the time and there were many manufacturers competing in the slug market making fancy slugs, rifled and otherwise with fancy attached wads.

Originating in the USSR could be one of the reasons we don't know much about it or why we haven't seen any factory-loaded ammunition in this part of the world. I found a diagram on the web with what looks like Russian script describing the construction of the slug. I haven't seen one in the flesh but am keen to hear from any of our readers who may be able to shed more light on the subject.

Rod Pascoe



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6 Shot, 4.25" Bbl
Classic blued finish,
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NEW \$1949



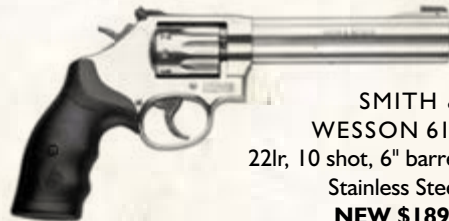
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Stayin' alive

A PLB might just save your life one day, advises **Brad Allen**

I recently watched a TV show which brought back memories. It was about a keen young solo hiker who almost lost his life through a series of minor mistakes and mishaps. Initially, he did the right thing by letting his father know where he was going and when he'd be home, though things started to go downhill soon after. Mistake number one was leaving his mobile phone in his parked car, meaning he was without a possible source of communication.

Along the way he misplaced a topographical map of the area, severely restricting his ability to navigate a safe alternate route back to civilisation. But the last straw was when descending a mountain he dislodged a large boulder which crashed into his leg, leaving a large open fracture. With a lot of luck and by practicing some basic first-aid skills he survived the experience after being rescued four days later, albeit with a severely broken leg, which would require years of reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation.

One of the major factors in surviving an episode like this is time. The quicker we're 'rescued' the better our chances of survival and recovery and it's not hard to imagine that one more night in the bush could easily have contributed to a totally different outcome. Alternately, if he had a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) in his kit his rescue would've been in a far more timely manner with much better health outcomes.

As a result of job changes in my younger days it became necessary for me to go hunting alone - either that or not hunt at all. It took a while to feel comfortable having only my own company in the bush but for many years now I've mostly hunted alone and enjoy it. When you're young and healthy and pursuing your chosen pastime (in my case hunting), mortality is something you rarely if ever think about. But as you grow older and dare I say wiser, you realise our

lives can change drastically in a heartbeat and not necessarily for the better.

Some years ago I headed south for a couple of weeks to have a crack at the mighty sambar in Victoria. As usual I was hunting solo and was unfamiliar with the area or climate and really didn't know from day to day where I'd end up hunting. As I sit back now and analyse that scenario I shiver to think of the possible consequences and outcomes, as there has been more than one hunter go 'missing in action' in the Alpine region of Victoria never to be heard of again.

As you may have guessed, 'Murphy' finally caught up with me on that hunt and even if it was only a light slap he gave



For less than the price of a good scope, a PLB could save your life.



me, it was a huge wake-up call. I'd been hunting in High Country along the Moroka River where it's steep, rugged and remote. During the morning I hunted to just under the snow line and had put up a couple of sambar, while mid-afternoon saw me heading back and down river towards camp. As I was negotiating a rather steep boulder-strewn hillside, a large rock I'd stood on decided to roll from under me.

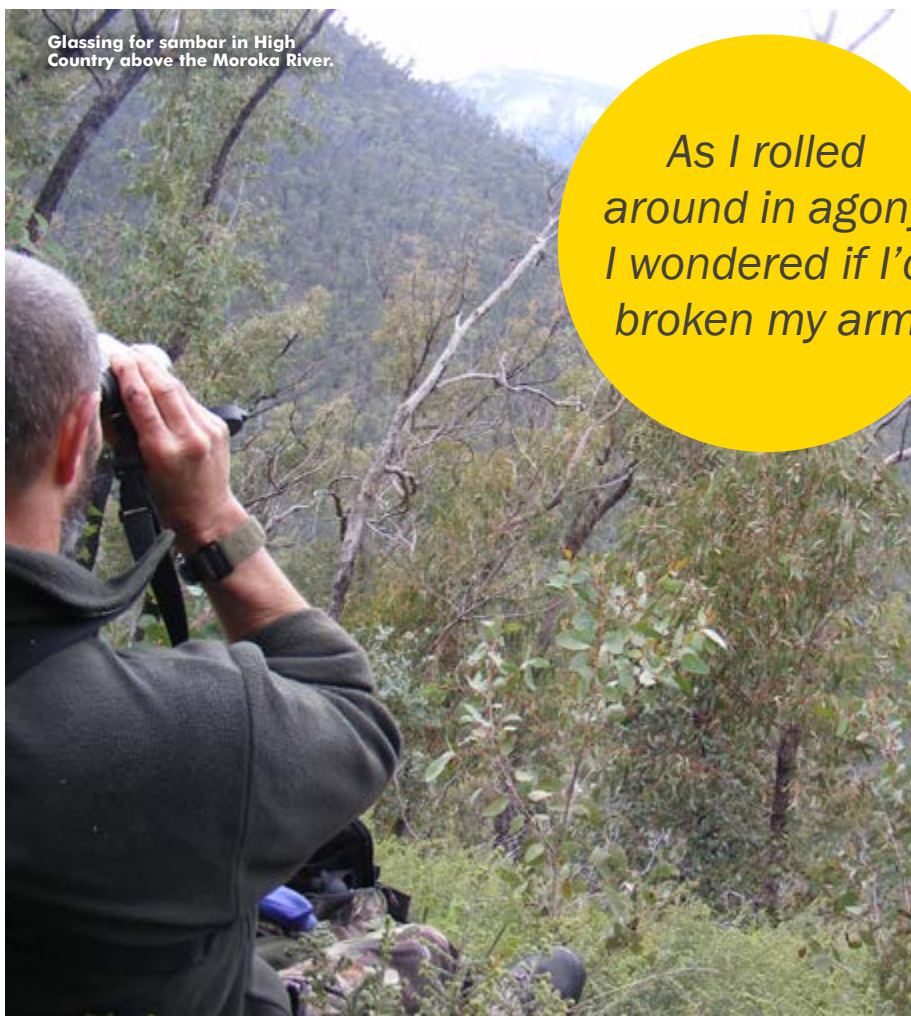
There was absolutely nothing I could do and, with nowhere to go, I fell backwards in what felt like slow motion. My main thought was to not let my Kimber Montana .338 Win Mag or its Zeiss 3-9x40 scope hit the deck and while the rifle didn't touch the ground, I did. My right elbow (the arm holding the rifle) took the brunt of the impact and it hurt a lot - no funny bone bump here, just excruciating pain. All I could do as I rolled around in agony was wonder if I'd broken my arm.

Although not as potentially fatal as a broken leg it would've been a very uncomfortable walk out, as on the way in it had been necessary to climb up and down some near vertical gullies which necessitated using both hands. I can only imagine how difficult that would've been in the dark with a freshly broken arm. A full five minutes later I tried to move my arm and to my great relief it did and although painful, I knew it wasn't broken. The first-aid kit patched up a gash on the point of my elbow which really needed stitches and, after a couple of Panadol, I continued back to camp.

During the walk out I came to realise if that rock had rolled on to my leg and broken it, being as high up the mountain as I was (just under the snow line) I may well have been dead by morning from shock and exposure. It was a sobering thought. Several days later on the way home to Queensland, I visited an old hunting mate who told me many guys who hunt in the Alpine won't even go into the bush to answer a call of nature without taking their PLB.

So the first item on my agenda on arriving home was to search the internet and work out which was the best PLB for my circumstances. Back then most of them were aimed at the boating market and consequently were too large for everyday carry by a hunter. Yet there were a few smaller models and I eventually decided the best one for me was the tiny McMurdo Fast-Find GPS 406MHz. At the time it was the smallest on the market and capable of guiding rescuers to within metres of your location anywhere in Australia or New Zealand.

It's possibly the best \$350 I've ever spent on hunting equipment and since then I've updated to an Australian-made KTI with



Glassing for sambar in High Country above the Moroka River.

As I rolled around in agony I wondered if I'd broken my arm



Eight essential items that can help to save your life - PLB, GPS, compass, topo map, mobile phone, UHF, torch and first-aid kit.

Stayin' alive

10-year battery life (I recently bought a GME PLB for my son Macen who also hunts alone in the Victorian High Country). Today there are many more to choose from, as all the major makers have a model suitable for the hiking/hunting market. Starting from about \$350 at time of writing they include offerings from GME, KTI, McMurdo, ACR and Rescue ME to name but a few.

Once you buy one you want it's a simple matter of registering your new PLB and personal details online with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority on their Australian 406MHz Distress Beacon Register and you're good to go. Regardless of how or where you hunt, it's not just the solo hunter who needs the security a PLB provides. Even when operating with a companion, an emergency situation could easily arise that's beyond the capability of the non-injured party to resolve.

At little more than 150 grams the extra weight of a small PLB is no burden in your day pack. But the thing to remember is it doesn't matter how small or powerful your chosen PLB is, it's of absolutely no use if you leave it at home or in the 4x4 - it has to be with you at all times in the bush. Mine lives in my daypack along with some other essential safety items including a topo map of the area, old fashioned compass, GPS, torch, first-aid kit and a small five-watt UHF radio. I also make a habit of throwing in the mobile phone as you can often pick up a signal when hunting high in the hills.

Most of us wouldn't think twice about splashing \$500 or more on a new scope for our favourite hunting rifle, yet probably haven't considered spending that on something which can save our lives, something that hopefully we'll never need to use. But if you ever do need one you'd better have it right there in your pack.

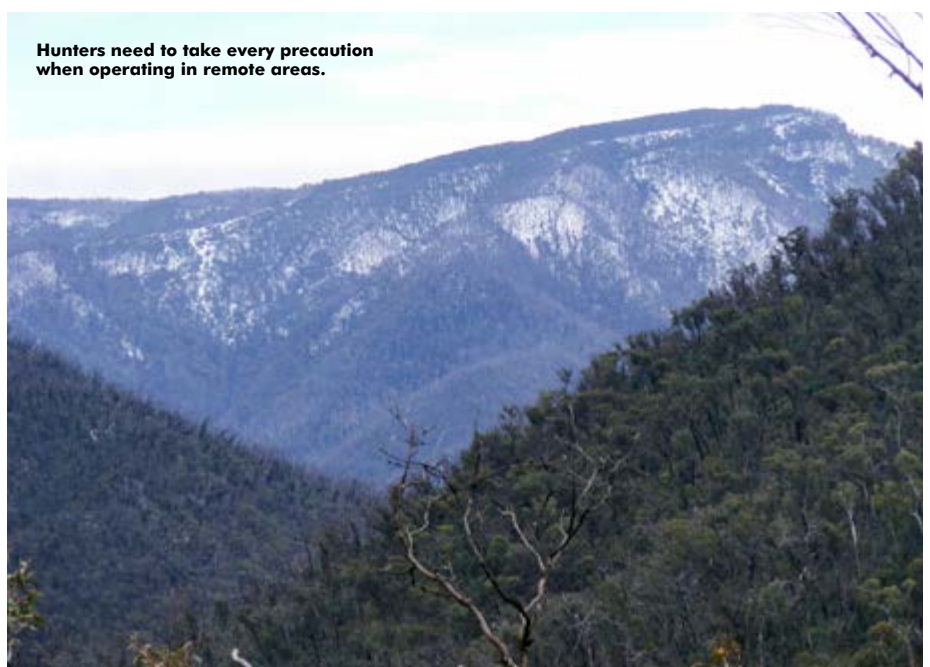
Statistically, hunting and shooting are very safe pastimes but things don't always go to plan and after my incident in the Victorian High Country, I'm definitely a convert and now wouldn't hunt anywhere without my PLB. I enjoy hunting but enjoy living even more and as someone once said: 'I wouldn't be dead for quids!' So take a second or two to think how your family would cope if you weren't around any more.

Most things we do in life have an element of risk and while we know the chances of a mishap in the bush may be small, they're still real. Yet for an investment of around \$500 or so we can put the odds back in our favour and that has to be cheap insurance. You really can't afford not to have a PLB so stay safe and enjoy the hunt. ●



All these safety items fit easily in the front compartment of most daypacks.

Hunters need to take every precaution when operating in remote areas.





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X-factor



A front-mounted bipod adds a new dynamic when shooting prone and operating as a straight-pull.

Daniel O'Dea hails the new improved Taipan rifle

The Southern Cross Small Arms Taipan Light, a compact, magazine-fed pump-action rifle chambered in .223 Wylde (.223 Remington), was highly anticipated when released not that long ago at the end of 2022. Just in time for Christmas, keen Australian shooters lined up to get behind this all Aussie-built rifle which offered modern MSR (Modern Sporting Rifle) styling and ergonomics but didn't go so far as to draw the ire of draconian appearance laws present in some states including New South Wales. And it was quite reasonably priced.

The rifle in general was well received but the launch of this completely new design didn't come without a few teething problems, notably a small batch had the cam pins fail while some had issues with the bolt catch. I noted when reviewing the rifle at launch the Cerakote finish on my early example was showing premature wear, unusually so for an otherwise tough and long-lasting finish.

Even then, at time of writing SCSA had already acted decisively, investing in new Cerakote spray booths and bringing the application in-house as was some of the other small component manufacturing. There was additional investment in machinery and staff, all to further guarantee

quality control and remove the possibility of any repeat instances of some of the minor issues experienced in early production.

Not resting on their laurels and rather than sitting back as the new rifle rolled out, SCSA were already busy at work with continued research and development, now aided by a growing customer base ever happy to provide feedback. This is why, not even 12 months after that launch, I found myself at SCSA headquarters with director Damir Lukic to pick up a new and improved version of the Taipan - the Taipan X - and no that doesn't mean Elon Musk has taken over the company for all you former Twitter users.

At first glance the Taipan X doesn't look all that different to the Light, though the changes are not insignificant as the X is no longer just a pump-action but a straight-pull rifle too. This has been achieved by spring-assisting the pump slide so that on release it'll drive forward under its own momentum. That means positive spring pressure always defaults the action to the closed position and if you pull the pump slide back and release, it'll fly forward and chamber a round from the magazine.

The addition of a machined slot to the left of the receiver allows for inclusion of a bolt handle which screws directly into the

side of the bolt carrier, meaning the rifle can now be cycled as a straight-pull, independent of the pump actuation. The pump handle and operation rod are still captive to the bolt so the pump assembly does still move, only now it can be done from the side charging handle rather than the pump slide, making the new X somewhat more versatile to use.



Finished awaiting packing, racks of the new Taipan X ready to go.

An added benefit of the new spring-assisted system is to make the previous side-mounted bolt release lever obsolete. On the Taipan Light this release was effectively there to stop the bolt falling out of battery or the action opening unintentionally. This lever had to be depressed to open the action without firing the rifle and is now replaced by the positive forward spring pressure of the new system.

Ironically, the rifle's bolt-stop button at the rear of the receiver now actually serves a purpose. On the Taipan Light I found this feature a solution to an issue which didn't exist. Sold as the answer to the chances of accidental bolt closure should someone choose to bounce around the back of a ute or on a bike with full magazine and open action, I found the whole premise quite ridiculous. Mind you, someone that silly is probably unlikely to activate it in the first place.

Sarcasm suggests a secondary purpose would be to accidentally bump against something or otherwise activate unintentionally to stop you cycling the rifle when needed, not something which happened to me personally but of which anecdotal evidence exists. But now this feature actually serves a genuine purpose, that being to lock the bolt back under the spring pressure to retain the chamber in the open position, be that for clearing or cleaning the rifle. A new positive spin on its existence so hooray for the Taipan bolt stop.

Another small but beneficial improvement is the addition of a polymer case deflector at the rear of the ejection port. On the Taipan Light, cases would strike the face of the receiver just rearward of the ejection port on the way out, potentially marking the Cerakote finish. This new deflector not only protects the finish but redirects ejected cases forward and away from the shooter's face. I've never tried shooting a Taipan off the left shoulder but perhaps a welcome addition for lefties too, in preventing an unwanted mouth full of brass.

These improvements aside the only other changes I could detect were an upgraded pistol grip from the standard black plastic mil spec A2 to a more ergonomic rubberised version incorporating the SCSA logo (nice touch), and the various receiver screw and bolt heads are now blackened rather than stainless in appearance.

When running the Taipan X through its paces the tangible benefits of these improvements quickly become evident. With a forward-mounted bipod and in the prone position, using the straight-pull function completely changes the loading dynamics from a cumbersome movement



A new Tan Taipan X, tripod-mounted using the ARCA adapter.



The new Taipan incorporates a left-side receiver slot and charging handle.



SCSA have announced two new colours to the Taipan X range with Burnt Bronze and Armour Black joining the Sig Dark Grey.

(operating a pump slide from prone) to a fast and efficient motion. To further take advantage of this style of shooting, SCSA will be offering an ACRA adapter mount which uses the two forward handguard bolt holes for attachment just forward of the magazine housing, an excellent solution for tripod use if desired.

The Taipan X is otherwise unchanged, using the same 420mm (16.5") stainless steel button-rifled barrel with a 1:8 twist,

threaded muzzle (1/2 x 28 TPI) and .223 Wylde chambering safely allowing the use of both 5.56 NATO loadings as well as all commercial .223 Remington offerings (the receiver is stamped for both).

Unfortunately, the trigger remains unchanged too - heavy, creepy and basically unredeemable and is a benchresters' nightmare, though to be fair par for the course with this style of hammer-fall trigger where fiddling with sear engagement, etc can



Right-side view on the bench.

result in all kinds of potential disasters. This type of trigger system is generally nonadjustable and heavy by design for safety reasons. In the field and for practical shooting it's not going to bother you but if you're target shooting off a bench you might hope for better. From experience the trigger will wear-in to a degree over time and improve slightly, though if impatient there are ways to expedite this covered in my original article.

Like its predecessor the gun produces very good practical accuracy for this style of rifle, in my experience being in the

1-1.5 MOA range with most ammo types. Ergonomics are excellent with MSR-type fire controls, adjustability for length of pull and cheek weld with the stock and plenty of 'rail estate'. This comes via both the continuous top rail for optics mounting and multiple forward M-lok slots for accessory fitment, while clever little bonuses like the machined QD sling cups top-off a well thought out package. For a detailed overview and recap of the shared Taipan features, check out my previous article in the March 2023 edition of *Australian Shooter* or visit the SCSA website. ●

TAIPAN X

Specifications

- Rifle:** SCSA Taipan X
- Action:** Spring-assisted pump action/straight-pull
- Trigger:** Single-stage
- Calibre:** .223 Wylde (.223 Remington/5.56 NATO)
- Capacity:** 10-round (two Magpul supplied)
- Barrel:** 16.5" (420mm)
- Twist rate:** 1:8
- Weight:** 3.2kg
- Muzzle:** Threaded ½ x 28
- Sights:** 565mm Picatinny rail for optics mounting
- Stock:** Alloy (TSP X)
- Overall length:** 890mm
- Length of pull:** 305mm (adjustable via spacers supplied)
- RRP:** About \$1899



New spring-assistance system visible within the handguard.

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SCAN ME

RED *alert*



Aimpoint Micro a feral's nightmare, says **Chris Redlich**

Among a few recent review items from Beretta Australia was a red dot sight, my second such item in a matter of months. Prior to reviewing my first one last year I was asking myself why I hadn't been interested in them sooner as, after using it, I was converted. The Aimpoint Micro H-2 is new to me but certainly not to most of the general shooting public, as the Scandinavian firm is by reputation one of the market leaders in compact red dot sights.

Tech stuff

On opening the box the first thing you read is: 'Congratulations on your purchase of an Aimpoint Micro Series sight! You hold in your hand the most advanced compact sighting system available today.' Bold claims indeed, though it's obvious Aimpoint is proud of its product and confident the user won't be disappointed. Built solidly from machined high-strength aluminium and coated in a non-reflective matte black finish, the supplied Micro H-2 fits the 'compact' niche nicely.

By all appearances it looks slick, measures just 75mm and feels light at a mere 120g but most importantly the device is ready for mounting straight out the box to your favourite, quick-handling hunting rifle, the integral dovetail clamp ensuring a solid mount to a Weaver-style or Picatinny rail. The single steel side screw tightens using the supplied Torx-head driver, though a simple thumb

tighten is all that's required to ensure a secure fit, even on a hard-kicking pig gun such as a .45-70 Govt lever action rifle.

Purposed for 'reactive' shooting, red dot sights are designed to be used easily and accurately with both eyes open and unlimited eye relief can be achieved, mounting the Aimpoint just about anywhere on the receiver of a bolt or lever-action rifle, shotgun or pistol. I chose to mount it forward of the ejection port on the Beretta-supplied Tikka Wild Boar rifle for no other reason than just because I could. In this position I was able to obtain a perfect sight picture and crystal clear red dot resolution.

The H-2 illuminated red dot has a size value of 2MOA and, paired with the 18mm aperture of both lenses (ocular and objective), provides a large field of view at 50m, enabling fast target acquisition of larger game such as running wild pigs. The objective lens has an anti-reflective coating and both lenses have flip-up covers for protection. The windage and elevation turrets are sheltered from snagging and tucked snugly within the confines of the aluminium body.

On removing those caps the adjustment dials require the two pins atop one turret cap to rotate the dials, a simple but ingenious arrangement should you need corrections while hunting. Alternatively, the pins on the back of the Torx tool can also be used for adjusting the dials. Both



The 2MOA red dot allows for rapid target acquisition.



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ACCURA REACHER 4.5-27X50 **\$549**

ACCURA VARMINATOR 5-30X56 **\$599**

In 2021 The Accura line of Optics was relaunched back into Australia. The **TRUE HUNT SERIES** immediately became a hit among hunters. Great optics and a selection of 4 different magnifications, matched with reticles designed, fit for purpose. This series remains unchallenged in its class.

Now Accura launch the new **RAPID** line of scopes. This new line offers features and prices that again, put them among the best value optics on the Australian market. Ideally suited for Rimfire or small magnum calibers' these new scopes include weaver rings and flip open caps. The red dot includes a riser and storage box. Visit our web site for further information or go to anyone of your nearest gun stores to see these amazing lines.

ACCURA RAPID 1X20
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ACCURA RAPID 3-9X40
WITH WEAVER RINGS 1" **\$159**

ACCURA RAPID 4-12X40
WITH WEAVER RINGS 1" **\$199**

The RAPID 3-9x40 and 4-12x40 include a set of 1" Weaver Rings. Both incorporate a Plex Reticle.

NEW!



Red alert

windage and elevation turrets allow for plus or minus 1m at 100m (or 1yd at 100yds) of adjustment and each click value is worth 13mm at 100m (half an inch at 100yds).

A red dot sight won't shine without power and on the right-hand side is the water-proof compartment for a single CR2032 3V battery whose life is ridiculously long, with the little button battery providing the shooter with more than five years of use when set at brightness level '8'. The sights turn on and off by simple rotation of the battery compartment dial and brightness intensity settings ranging from 1-12, allowing enough reticle flexibility to suit any environment, dark or bright.

Sight and field test

It doesn't usually take long to sight-in a scope to a firearm with a Picatinny rail at 50m and following a quick bore sight session of the T3X Wild Boar, I had the Micro H-2 perfectly tuned to the rifle. Even with a 2MOA reticle, I'm genuinely surprised at just how accurate these red dot sights are and after landing consistent three-shot groups under 0.75" at 50m with the supplied .308 Win, 150-grain Sako ammunition, I was more than confident of achieving 'MOPH' (minute of pig heart) in field testing.

Not from lack of trying, let me assure you, I'd been foiled on several occasions by hairy little ferals which had been digging up my farmer friend's property. I did, however, chalk up many field hours testing the sight





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- Adjustable regulator
- Adjustable hammer tension
- Cocking changeable from left to right
- Safety changeable from left to right
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- Adjustable cheek rest
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KATRAN B

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ACCESSORIES



24 Month
Warranty



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Red alert

and playing with different brightness levels, including sunny daytime scenarios, night time and even bushfire smoke. There was a brightness level to suit all occasions, with the Micro H-2 providing a clear red dot and sight picture even through the smoky haze while hunting pigs late one afternoon.

Then fortunes changed almost by accident and the little porkers which had been dodging me for so long elected to take their chances late one evening while my wife and I were spending quality couple time together - spotlighting! Throwing in the Beretta-supplied .308 T3X fitted with the Micro H-2 red dot as a last-minute inclusion to our selection of varmint rifles proved a stroke of genius.

"Pigs," said Sue-Ann as a huffing and puffing mob on the move stepped into the spotlight to take centre stage. Down came my bolt-action 22PPC and up to the shoulder went the T3X Wild Boar rifle I had

at the ready. I took a sight picture offhand, aimed and fired at the biggest of the mob, a young boar, and down he went with a resounding thud.

Although Sue-Ann found it tough to follow which pig I'd target next, she did well with the aid of the spotlight. As it happened there was enough side glare to make clear target acquisition of another two pigs, highlighting the versatility and rapid 'point-ability' of the Aimpoint in lowlight situations. Granted, I wouldn't normally use a red dot sight for this but had no other choice as the clear optics of the Micro H-2 lenses enabled the despatch of three feral pigs, a great result which speaks volumes in underlining the Aimpoint's lowlight credentials.

Conclusion

After testing I'm confident Aimpoint will live up to the claims I read on opening the box. Proudly made in Sweden, the Micro H-2 red dot sight is rugged enough to handle anything an Australian bush hunter can throw at it. The integral mount enables

swift and secure fitment to any repeating rifle (bolt or lever-action) with a Picatinny rail or weaver-style base. And the ability to adjust the red dot brightness for any situation, together with rapid target acquisition, make it ideal for close-quarter deer (such as forested sambar) and pig shooting as outlined above.

Finally I must add that testing the H-2, my second red dot sight review in quick succession, has reinforced new enthusiasm for them and their relevance in today's market. Priced at \$1409 (at time of writing) isn't surprising considering the Micro H-2 is a top-quality European-made optic, covered by a 10-year warranty for added peace of mind. More at berettaaustralia.com.au ●



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in underlining the
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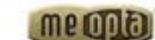
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The current Murganella Hunter. Though slightly different, both knives were made from the same template.



Looksharp

The Murganella Hunters a cut above,
as John Dunn reports

When we came back from the Territory in 2022 I had a knife idea doing the rounds in my tiny mind. As always, I was interested in the knives used by Rob and Caleb Tritten from R&R Outfitters as, like all professionals who process large animals on a regular basis, they rely on a roll of butchers' knives with a good steel to keep them sharp.

A roll of knives is a sensible way to deal with trophy preparation and meat processing and as pedestrian as their appearance may be, their designs have been developed and refined over many years. They work. They're relatively cheap. They're reliable, easily carried under the seat of a hunting car or floor of a buggy and readily replaced at the end of their working lives, all positives which add to their favour.

For all of that, ordinary hunters like you and I can't really carry a knife roll in our daypacks when we're prowling around the bush. It's just not practical, especially

in terms of weight and, if the truth be told, most of us probably don't need to. Yet that doesn't mean errant hunters and occasional knifemakers like me can't think about creating a knife that's a compromise between a utilitarian tool like a butcher's knife and a hunting blade with a bit more eye appeal. Yes I know it's all been done before but there are no laws around trying to reinvent the wheel, which brings me back to where I started.

After thinking about designs for a while I sat down with pencil and graph paper and made some drawings. Like my original idea they needed some refining but in the end I had two designs I was happy with. Both were simple ones in the Dewey style: full tang, made from 3.2mm 1084 steel, fitted with simple wooden scales secured by Loveless bolts with a lanyard tube included. Each had a blade length of 14cm (5½") which for most hunters is about as long as a practical hunting blade needs to be. The first one I dubbed the Banteng so logically the second had to be the Buffalo.

I sent them to Mr Tritten for a workout and eventually he reported back, saying he loved the way they worked, especially their edge-holding properties under some fairly trying conditions. Mud, hair and thick skins have a way of testing the sharpness of blades made from less than adequate steel. Of the two he reckoned the Banteng was the better option, then gave me some constructive criticisms and suggested minor design changes I was happy to take on board, simply because he has the practical experience to back up his views with solid reasoning and a hard-earned feel for knives.

Though I'd every intention of revamping the knife as soon as possible it didn't work out that way - there were other priorities as everything ground to a halt at the end of March last year when the Good Lady and I contracted Covid. I came out of it unscathed but for her there have been complications which are still playing out. All our travel plans for the year were cancelled including an already booked return hunt on Cobourg in September.

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Look sharp

The original Buffalo (right) and Banteng knives sent to Rob Tritton for testing.

My hunting mate Graeme Fifield decided he was still going and a few days before he was due to leave, we were having a yarn over a mug of tea when I showed him a chef's knife I'd just completed, which sparked a conversation about the ones I'd sent to Tritto. Given his long and diverse experiences as a hunter, Graeme had his own ideas about what a good knife for the Top End was and, not surprisingly, they more-or-less matched Rob's earlier comments. We even agreed such a knife would probably be handy for sambars too.

I made some mental notes as we went along and when he left, went out to my workshop, resurrected the original cardboard patterns from a filing drawer I keep such things in and went to work. I've called the resulting product the Murganella Hunter after the location it was made to

be used in. Like the Banteng and Buffalo knives, it's made from 3.2mm 1084 steel, hardened and tempered to specification. Blade length remained 14cm but was a tad deeper with a little more belly carrying through to the slightly dropped point, while the handle was longer and more bellied to fit a large hand like mine.

The scales were cut from mountain-grown black wattle, lined with black .5mm G10 then epoxy glued and secured to the tang by a pair of Corby bolts. The handle is 20mm thick at the spine, tapering towards the bottom for a better grip and is finished with Tru Oil rifle stock. I gave the knife and its sheath to Graeme the day before he left and asked him to give it a workout. He'd been there three days when he texted me a photo of a big buffalo bull taken with Winston, his .416 Remington.



Graeme Fifield and his banteng bull. The Murganella Hunter was used to take the complete skin for a life-sized mount.



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Look sharp



Rob Tritten uses the Murganella Hunter to remove a banteng skin.



The Murganella is a handy knife for sambar deer hunters, used to take prime cuts and hindquarters off two animals.

The following day there was a photo of a good banteng bull, also taken by Winston, but still no comment on the knife. Then some pictures of the blade being used to skin the banteng arrived, along with one of my smaller hunting knives the Trittens have been using for 12 months or so. A cryptic comment at the bottom of the text read “great knives do great jobs”.

That got to me so I rang him to find out what was going on. Mr Tritten had initially used the Murganella to take the cape off the buffalo. He found the point was too rounded for making the piercing cuts needed so back in camp he put it on his sharpening grinder, removed some of the belly then resharpened the edge.

When the banteng was taken he used the small hunter to make the opening cuts, then the Murganella to remove the whole skin for a

life-sized mount. Two other banteng capes were subsequently taken, the modification overcoming the belly problem. Rob found the handle too big for his hand but had had nothing but compliments to make about the way the knife handled and cut.

If all the above sounds like I'm pleased with the way the Murganella project has panned out, it's probably because I am. The satisfaction which comes from turning a concept into a working reality can be a little heady and the fact the Murganella passed field-testing with flying colours in the hands of a professional hunter just makes the effort even sweeter.

Later, Graeme came round to tell me about his trip and said he'd also used the modified Murganella to take the best cuts and haunches from a couple of sambar deer. The blade needed only a minor touch-up with a diamond steel to retain its edge but for sambars he reckoned it would work better if the point was taken back a little bit further. The modification he suggested won't take long and thereafter I intend to find time to make one for myself. ●

• Next month: Getting a handle on things



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The 'gift' that keeps on giving

Joe Norris reckons a free rifle is his lucky charm

As I was reading a recent edition of *Australian Shooter* it occurred to me that most hunting articles are about successful trips and rightly so, as after all, that's what we're out there for and unsuccessful ones don't usually make for such a good a read. I've had far more occasions where I didn't manage to secure my target species than those where I came home with the goods, which could've been for various reasons ranging from weather, other hunters having been in the area recently or my own mistakes.

I'm probably not alone in being superstitious when it comes to hunting and believe in karma and luck playing a part, which doesn't mean I don't do everything in my power to ensure success. This includes making sure I have the wind in my favour and maintain concentration as I stalk my

chosen area as well as knowing the habits and preferences of my target species. I even take my boots off if I have to, just to make as little noise as possible.

Yet on occasion it makes no difference what I do, as something stuffs up an otherwise perfect stalk. Could be a lookout cockatoo, an unseen plover or the wind suddenly changing just as I'm moving into a position where a shot could present itself. At other times it's almost too easy and doesn't seem possible to make a mistake, though sadly this is uncommon. I have noticed I seem to be a lot more successful when carrying a particular firearm which naturally has since become my 'lucky' rifle.

I was given the rifle more than 30 years ago when a friend came back from Africa. Barry had bought the Ruger 77 paddle stock in .338 Win Mag to hunt larger plains game

including eland, the largest antelope in the world. He'd replaced the stock for one with a wider butt and better recoil pad as well as having the barrel magna-ported. Despite all this it still kicked the stuffing out of him, so he asked me if I wanted it. A free rifle? Of course I wanted it and so became the proud owner of this stainless beauty. This was before the Port Arthur tragedy and introduction of Queensland's gun laws, so I didn't even have to obtain a Permit to Acquire.

Almost every time I've hunted with it I've been lucky enough to take the animal I was tracking. Even though I'm way over-gunned for the species being hunted, I often still take my gift gun as I believe it brings me luck. There have even been times when out of the blue I've been given hunting opportunities I wouldn't have normally been afforded and on most of



Bit over-gunned with a .338 Win Mag.



Joe with the sambar stag and Ruger in .338 Win Mag.

half-dozen does with him. As I was already crawling I set myself up in the prone position and waited for a clear shot. Eventually the buck stopped about three-quarters facing me, so I put the cross-hairs on the point of his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The rifle was loaded with 185gr Barnes TSSX bullets pushed along by 62.5gms of 2208 so I knew it was going to be a pass through on the light framed buck which collapsed at the shot.

Because of the top performance of Barnes bullets I tend to load lighter projectiles than I would with normal lead-cored ones, which allows me to push them a bit faster and so flatten the trajectory while still maintaining the penetration Barnes are known for. The bullet did indeed pass straight through and unfortunately destroyed his back leg in doing so, though I still managed to harvest a 40-litre esky full of venison. Later that same trip in Victoria I was invited to hunt a private forestry block holding way too many sambar which the manager wanted culled. Another unexpected opportunity, probably thanks to my cousin more than my rifle but I know what I believe. Anyway, it was time for the gift gun to make the most of it.

After being shown round the plantation and areas where the manager had seen deer, I was left to my own devices. I'd only walked a few kilometres when I was honked by a hind I failed to spot in the blackberries. She gave me such a fright I never had the chance to take a shot and when I recovered from the shakes I made a mental note to 'slow down idiot'. That was my last contact for the day though I now knew where I was heading the next morning.

I was in position well before daylight and sat overlooking a gully where the hind was the previous evening. Listening to the day waking up to the dawn chorus, I was reminded of how beautiful the bush is at that time of day and while I'm sure I could hear deer walking around in the gloom of the pre-dawn, it was probably my imagination.

I could make out shapes at the bottom of the gully but didn't have anywhere near enough light for a positive identification, so I sat perfectly still as the light slowly improved. Eventually I was able to see clearly and used my binoculars to closely examine the gully and surrounding pine trees. In one direction the rows of pines aligned and created a wall, though the gully was clear and with ample blackberries growing in the bottom seemed a likely place for deer to be feeding.

I'd been watching the base of the gully for half an hour and was about to head for



Velvet antlers soaking in formaldehyde after being injected to preserve the velvet and soft tips.

another spot when on looking in the direction of the wall of pines I spied two sambar. One was a large stag in velvet and the other a mature hind, though I really didn't want a hind or a velvet stag as I was after a trophy as well as the meat.

But I'd told the manager I'd shoot any deer which presented so was committed to taking at least one of them. Looking closely at his antlers I could see they were still soft on the main and inner tips, though I knew where I could lay my hands on some formaldehyde to treat them. I decided to try for the stag and, if the chance arose, go for the hind next.

I crawled to the nearest tree as the deer were about 200m away, feeding around on the young blackberry shoots and totally unaware of my presence. Carefully chambering a round I put the cross-hairs behind the stag's shoulder as he turned broadside. He hardly reacted to the shot and I wasn't even sure I'd hit him as he jumped and took a couple of steps, looking for the source of the noise. After a few seconds the stag hit the deck as I looked for the hind but she was long gone.

After watching for a few minutes to ensure he wasn't going to stagger up, I made my way down and thanked him for his life. I took the usual photos, being sure to include the gift rifle before butchering him for transport with my cousin's help. While I don't know for sure if the rifle had anything to do with any of this or the numerous other trips it has been on, I believe it has and that can only be good for confidence. Sometimes it seems unlikely and at other times it's a 'gift'. ●

these occasions I've had the rifle with me, so maybe it wants to go hunting too.

I was visiting my daughter in New South Wales when her neighbour asked if I'd like to hunt fallow deer on his place and, as I was on my way to Victoria to hunt sambar, I had the Ruger with me. Turned out it was the fallow rut at the time so the stars were aligning already. The next morning after walking several kilometres up and down hills we heard a buck croaking from over the next ridge and went into stealth mode. The wind was in our favour and as we crept up to the crest we could hear the agitated buck becoming more and more worked up.

Carefully crawling the last couple of metres so as not to silhouette ourselves, we peeped over the edge and about 150m away was a big fallow croaking his head off and running around trying to control the

It's after the sun has set the Hikmicro Cheetah comes into its own.



Cat's whiskers!

Hikmicro Cheetah LRF delighted Daniel O'Dea

Night vision really marks the next generation in rifle optics. The technology isn't new but it's only recently it's starting to become more affordable and a prime example is Hikmicro's Cheetah LRF. In this case it's not just a night vision optic as it has several other functions such as being both a still and video digital camera, a rangefinder and IR emitter. Furthermore, it can be used as a rail-mounted riflescope, a clip-on night vision attachment to a conventional scope or handheld night vision monocular - clearly an extremely versatile piece of equipment.

Rather than a traditional scope, here you're dealing with something more akin to a digital camera which can see in the dark, with a programmable reticle so it can be used as a riflescope. Looking into the ocular housing you're viewing an image pixelated in 1920 x 1080 resolution on a .49" OLED display, effectively watching a tiny digital TV. The vision is provided by a 2560 x 1440 high-definition sensor with the

reticle selected and displayed on-screen as opposed to being set or lens-etched as with a traditional optical lens scope. Zero adjustment is by selection of the display pixel corresponding with the reticle image's position on target with zoom accomplished digitally and not by adjustment of lens.

The Hikmicro Cheetah LRF arrived boxed as a digital night vision monocular though it must be paired with either an eyepiece (for monocular and scope use) or an adapter if used as a clip-on. If it's the former you'll also need the rail mount and all four items are sold separately, so bear this in mind. For review we were supplied with all four to demonstrate its versatility. What you have in the box is two rechargeable batteries and charger, USB cable, carry strap, lens cloth and owner's manual. The unit also comes housed in a carry case.

Unboxing, the first thing I did was fit the eyepiece to start with it as a handheld night vision monocular. Doing a quick walk around you'll find a turret-type screwcap

being the battery compartment which holds a single 18650 battery giving up to 5½ hours of use. Forward of this are both the built-in infrared (IR) illuminator and laser rangefinder, the former which includes a ring to adjust from spot to flood.

Moving to the right is a small panel giving access to the USB port from where you can connect to the device via the cable provided. On the other side are the main controls consisting of three buttons - two 'press' and one 'press and a dial' - and lastly there's both a front lens focus ring and rear diopter adjustment ring as per traditional scope layout.

The Cheetah is 182mm long (used as a clip-on) growing to 215mm with eyepiece installed. Width is 70mm, height 87mm and the quoted weight is 477gr. Installing one of the two provided batteries I powered the unit up and began to explore. The front button serves as the power on and off as a long press and standby mode as a short press. The central button activates



Provides your conventional scope with night vision capacity

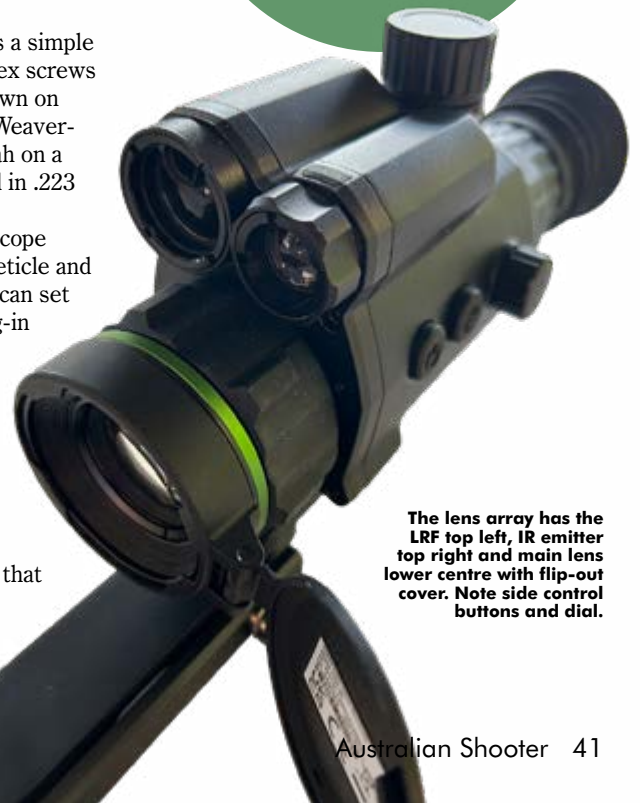
the laser rangefinder (LRF) for the short press and changes lighting modes with a long press, while the rear button and dial are used to toggle through and select menu options (long press) and activate the camera (short).

Using the dial you can select from 18 menu items leading to sub-menus controlling various aspects of the device, everything from brightness and contrast, recording and audio settings through to reticle options and selections. This may sound complicated but think of it like the settings options on your android or iPhone, with a lot of them being one-off set and forget-type and others you might use more frequently. It's all pretty simple to navigate and come to terms with.

In use there are four selectable viewing modes - Day mode (colour), Night (classic black and white), Automatic and Defog. In Automatic the unit senses the best viewing mode for the conditions or you can manually override for self-selection. I next fitted

the scope rail mount which was a simple matter of attaching it via two hex screws provided, though it will lock down on any conventional Picatinny or Weaver-type rail. I mounted the Cheetah on a SCSA Taipan rifle I had to hand in .223 Remington.

After mounting, to use as a scope you must select your desired reticle and again, using the dial menu you can set up five reticle profiles. Sighting-in the Cheetah is made simple via use of the Freeze mode which effectively provides a one-shot zero function. You line up on your target and fire one round, line up again and with a steady rest on the point of aim, select Freeze which halts the image frame at that moment. Then using the menu dial you move the X and Y grid coordinates to place a mirrored aiming mark



The lens array has the LRF top left, IR emitter top right and main lens lower centre with flip-out cover. Note side control buttons and dial.

Cat's whiskers!



Daniel recorded a sow with piglets in tow at 109 yards.

to match the point of impact. Storing this profile now has point of aim matching point of impact and the rifle is zeroed.

The Cheetah is also a digital camera with a generous 64GB of memory. To take still photographs you press the dial and mode (centre) button at the same time when a green tick appears on screen stating 'Capture Succeeded'. For video, a short press on the dial button starts and stops recording. While recording, a red dot and counter appears in the top left of the screen and when stopped, a green tick appears stating 'Recording Succeeded'. Audio is also recorded but can be turned off if desired.

The system provides pre-recording, a clever function which is recoil-activated and captures either seven, 10 or 15 seconds either side of the shot based on selection from the menu. Recorded image files can be exported by the USB cable connection to your PC or viewed and exported directly through your smartphone or device.

The Cheetah connects to your phone or tablet via the Hikmicro Sight App through hotspot and, once connected, enables you to capture, record and configure parameters all from your phone. It's just a matter of downloading the App and registering the device using your product's serial number. When successfully connected you can view the interface of the unit in real time on your phone and, if shooting with a partner, they can look at your phone and view exactly what you can see through the sight. Again, something that could be used as a training aid.

The Cheetah has a 2.6x to 20.8x digital zoom and enjoys a wide field of view. I found it provided its best sight picture at closer range as at distances greater than about 100m, finer detail is lost as the picture can become grainier under pixelation. Don't get me wrong, you can still see

clearly but clarity suffers under digital zoom at longer distances. Closer in the image is picture perfect.

The built-in LRF is rated out to 1000m and can be programmed as a single activation or 15 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes or 5 minutes. In the latter modes ranging is automatically updating every second, the range displayed in the top right of the screen in monocular and scope mode. In the field I found it excellent when used in one of the continuous LRF modes, being able to move between different targets with updated LRF readings presenting immediately. Working just as well at night as in daylight, I could easily range my front gate at the farm 973 yards down the track in darkness.

Trying the unit as a clip-on, the adapters come for various-sized objective lenses. Thinking I'd best fit it to my regular night-time spotlighting rig, I requested the larger adapter to suit the objective housing of my 3-12x56 Kahles. In hindsight it may have been better to pair a scope with a smaller objective lens as even on 3x I couldn't view the whole screen. Yet I did discover that when used as a clip-on the screen view reduces to compensate and at the same time, available on-screen information appears in low centre screen. For instance, LRF readings are no longer top right but in low centre where you can see them.

As a clip-on the Hikmicro Cheetah definitely works as advertised and does provide your conventional scope with night vision capacity, though don't expect your scope's power adjustments to work in the same manner in magnifying the image. In



For monocular use the unit comes supplied in a handy travel case.

this case, increasing power range basically has you looking closer at the screen image within the Cheetah. So at very high-power range it would be like pressing your face against the TV screen where you can almost count individual pixels. I feel the Cheetah would be most effective on low to medium-powered riflescopes or the lower end of the variable range on more powerful ones.

I've tried to cover all the major selling points but have to say this device is packed full of features and the more time I spent with it the more I discovered. You're not just buying a night vision device but a camera, rangefinder and much more. If technology isn't your thing don't despair, as once you start it becomes rather intuitive and you'll have it figured out in no time.

In summary it would appear to be a great entry point for those looking to dip a toe into the night vision market, as a monocular and rangefinder it'll give great service. For use as a scope or clip-on I suggest its best applications will be when fitted to a rimfire or air rifle or for close-in work on a centrefire at night. A local price check sees the Hikmicro Cheetah LRF selling for just below \$2000 at time of writing which would appear good value. More at hikmicrotech.com ●



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Bounty hunter

Chris Redlich recalls a chance wild dog encounter and the ZeroTech connection



Was that a dog or am I seeing things? I turned the ignition off and peered through a gap in the trees by the creek line to take a closer look. A flash of orange close to the cattle at 300m briefly caught my attention until I decided my eyes were playing tricks and it was just a calf running around his mother. Not expecting an eventful afternoon I'd just arrived at the target range on a friend's property to sight in a new ZeroTech review scope, a place I frequent to test equipment.

I guess I'm lucky compared to my writing compatriots in the city, as shooting opportunities for myself are literally minutes away from town and quite often a drive home from work can include a hunt before dinner. This particular afternoon was no different and a courtesy text message to the owners letting them know I'd be out for a sighting session on my way home from a job was how it all began.

The session was relaxed and by all reports the new ZeroTech Trace ADV 4-24x50 MRAD scope zeroed superbly at 100m, making it a perfect fit for my varmint rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor. ZeroTech aren't new to me as I own two of their scopes, and a week earlier my son Carl and I shot two wild dogs at long range on my brother's property using the same rifle with a Trace HD 3-18x50 MOA target scope and Trace 3-12x44 hunting scope on my .22PPC. Carl and I both enjoyed instant success that weekend thanks to a steady rest and optical quality of both scopes.

With the review scope ready I was keen to test further at a later date, shooting long

Scalp ready to take home for bounty collection.



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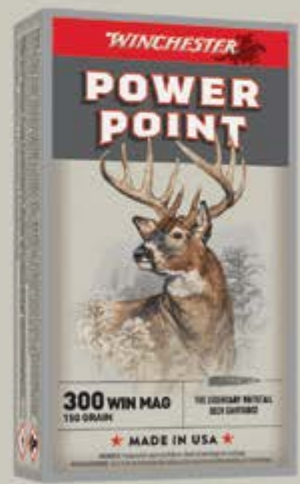
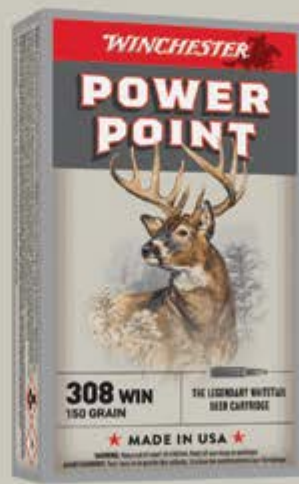
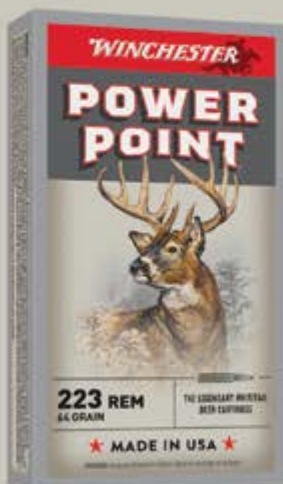
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Bounty hunter

range targets and perhaps a little hunting. Little did I know at the time that a 'later date' for field testing was about to unfold. By now the sun was starting to dip and with a dinner date planned with my wife upon return, I began to wrap-up proceedings.

Then suddenly a flash of orange in the bush grabbed my attention again. Looking through the windows of my ute, a wild dog - most likely the one from an hour or so ago I'd dismissed as a brain malfunction - came into full view. The dilemma was my rifle was unloaded on the bench as the dog was closing in, leaving a three-metre gap to cover in order to re-arm myself.

On recounting the story later to good friend Winnie she likened me to cartoon hunter Elmer Fudd, as each exaggerated step was taken to collect my rifle and hopefully remain undetected by the pest. Keeping eyes on the dog's movement I chambered a 140-grain round and tucked another in my pocket, then 'Elmer-like' carefully made my way back to the ute.

Taking a rest against the rear ladder rack I had a sight picture as the dog frequently thrust its nose to the sky to catch a scent. Thankfully a 20km/h westerly wind was in my favour but how the dog didn't spot the vehicle was a mystery. Due to the long grass and paddock fence I was unable to take a clear shot but the predator wasn't stopping and its path was about to cross on to my cleared target lane.

The relaxed sighting session I'd enjoyed moments earlier was now a heart-racing situation as the wild dog ducked under the



Afterwork sighting for ZeroTech products prior to the wild dog appearing.

barbwire fence and presented at 50m. With no time to sit down I promptly returned to the benchrest, knelt behind my rifle and regained a sight picture. The dog wasn't stopping and I thought it must have realised the game was up as it dashed for the cover of long grass again.

Then to my surprise it sprinted back on to the range and ran away from me as a rear-end shot presented. The Creedmoor barked and the predator was dead in an instant as the projectile passed the full length of its body. On closer inspection she was sporting a lovely winter coat and in good condition for a post-breeding wild dog, likely fuelled by a menu of native animals

and preying on the weaker elements in the farmer's herd.

Knowing I wasn't going to make my dinner date with Sue-Ann, I promptly texted her the news and vindication was received by reply: 'Wow - that's so cool!' as she reminded me the local council pays a \$50 bounty for each wild dog. It was now close to last light so time was of the essence for photos and removing the scalp. As with most reviews, my trusty tripod and camera timer combined to record the moment just before darkness fell. My farmer friend was understandably rapt with another wild dog removed from the property and although it was a



Chance encounter wild dog on the range with 100m target in the background.



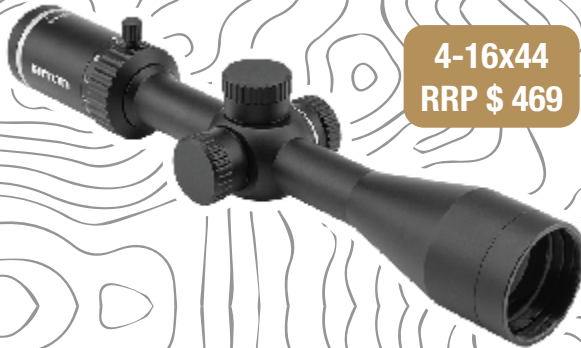
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*Fuelled by
a menu of native
animals and the
weaker elements
in the farmer's
herd*

The ZeroTech Thrive helped Carl take his first wild dog at 230m.

chance encounter, it will remain fond in my memory for a long time.

A few weeks later, audible snorts and foot-stomping aroused my attention and to my surprise once again, while packing up following another afternoon's sighting session, a large boar at 100m expressed his displeasure at my presence and almost dared me to chase him. Trouble was I'd just finished stowing the rifles and my bumbling efforts to re-arm myself allowed the porker enough time to slip into the gully and out of view.

Knowing pigs in cover tend to hide rather than run, I approached the gully where it met the creek line. A careful stalk towards where I thought the pig might be hiding must have unsettled the big fella as the

long grass rustled ahead. Hackles raised on the back of my neck and rifle trained on the bank for a quick shot, he broke cover from behind me and made for the safety of the creek from where I'd approached. That pig lives to see another destructive day for now, though this had me thinking that although mostly quiet, my target shooting range is situated smack bang in the middle of feral heartland.

Down the years I've taken many wild dogs on this property but as the saying goes: 'It's been a long time between drinks' and that sums up the situation since shooting my last one there. Sixteen years ago I had a spine-tingling showdown with a wild dog bitch no more than 100m from where my benchrest is now located. She'd

stealthily responded to my howls and before I knew it was bounding in on me until my 7mm .08 Rem beat her to the draw at a crazy 10 metres.

My latest surprise encounter highlights the fact that while sitting at the bench with ear muffs on, otherwise distracted while shooting at targets, it pays to remain vigilant as you never know what's lurking in the grass and trees. Yet despite recent events, things generally appear to have settled down recently. I guess reviewing numerous products has exerted indirect pressure on feral visitors due to regular shooting and deterred wild dogs from regularly inhabiting the area, a scenario that's most welcomed by my good friend on the land. ●



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Flying colours

Pecar scope range well worth investigating, says Ben Unten



A scope from the White Carbon range.

The team responsible for Pecar Optics has decades of industry experience and in addition to constantly researching and developing new products, they back their sales with a 10-year warranty on all optics. Pecar offer three grades of riflescopes in the White Carbon (aimed at the everyday shooter), Blue Carbon (affordable full-featured scopes) and Black Carbon with professional-grade precision optics.

White Carbon

Australian Shooter was sent a 3-9x40mm scope for review which was shipped in a protective cloth wrap and supplied with a cleaning cloth, clear and yellow-tinted objective and ocular caps respectively as well as a neat little double-ended cleaning pen/brush. The scope is 310mm long, weighs roughly 440g and has a 25.4mm (1") nitrogen-filled tube. Lenses are multi-coated and the scope is parallax free at 91m (100yds).

Windage and elevation adjustments are slotted and each positive click is nominally 6.35mm at 91m (1/4" at 100yds), fine cross-hairs meet in the centre then there are 4x mil-dots out to each post. From tip-to-tip of each post, both vertical and horizontal subtends 762mm at 91yds (30" at 100yds) which makes for a fast and easy way to help calculate holdover and lead when shooting, as well as a coarse method of range-finding using an animal of known dimensions.

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Flying colours

Field of view is 3.2m-9.6m at 91m (10.5ft-31.6ft at 100yds). Clarity is excellent for a budget-priced scope and it passed the '10-click box test' easily. This is where a group is fired then the scope adjusted 10 clicks up and another group shot, adjusted 10 clicks left and another group, 10 clicks down and finally 10 clicks right. If the scope is accurate the final group should overlay the first one. RRP: \$199.99.

Blue Carbon

Representing the Blue Carbon option is a 3-9x44mm scope with mil-dot reticle. This also came with a cloth wrap, clear and tinted scope covers and Pecar Optics cleaning brush and additionally a neoprene sock for added protection in the field and during transport. This is a beefier offering approximately 355mm long with the ocular ring focused for my eyes and weighing about 480g. The objective is 44mm, ocular roughly 33mm and the tube 30mm and is listed as being waterproof, fog-proof and sports multi-coated lenses.

But the big step-up here is this one's parallax free courtesy of an adjustable focus-length ring located around the objective bell. You may wonder why the listed ranges go from roughly 10m out to infinity and that's because this scope is listed as being suitable for use with air rifles. If you're anything like me, thought you knew better and mounted a scope not suited to air rifles on a slug gun, you've likely discovered that as the recoil forces are in the opposite direction to a gunpowder-propelled projectile, the scope falls apart - very quickly.

Eye relief is listed as 76-100mm depending on your magnification and the power ring to adjust magnification is highly knurled, which allows for much easier adjustment in wet or humid conditions. Windage and elevation changes are done via a raised rib, allowing for toolless adjustment after the turret caps have been unscrewed.

The Blue Carbon is a considerable development in terms of features with its larger objective bell, parallax correction and easy-to-adjust magnification. I particularly like the neoprene sock as, during wet weather, it allows for a clear and dry field of view when it's first removed. This scope also passed the box test and I experienced no issues during use. RRP: \$349.

Black Carbon

The Black Carbon scope is 3-12x56mm with a one-piece 30mm tube and German #4 reticle. This one weighs 400gm and is 345mm long when the ocular focus is adjusted for my eyes. The power ring features a single raised rib which gives it



A quality choice of affordable riflescopes.

a sleeker profile but still allows for ease of adjustment.

It's listed as waterproof and fog-proof and comes with a fitting/cleaning mat, lens pen, neoprene scope cover and lens cloth along with target turrets and a battery, as it has an illuminated reticle. Eye relief is listed as 89mm and this scope features fully multi-coated lenses with 88 per cent light transmission. The illuminated reticle offers excellent brightness for both day and night shooting and the advantages of the larger 56mm bell are apparent as soon as you bring the rifle to your shoulder.

The Black Carbon is listed as being parallax free at 91m with field of view of 13-3.3m (43-10.7") at that range. This one comes with a 10-year warranty and also sailed through the box test with excellent clarity and no problems during testing. RRP: \$745.

The versatility of the Pecar range is there's a scope to suit most requirements and most budgets and I recommend visiting protactical.com.au for more info and a full dealer listing. ●



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Taking a shine

Sam Garro has been refurbishing a .310 Cadet

Refurbishing a gunstock, in particular on a .310 Cadet rifle, isn't as difficult as initially thought, although step-by-step instructions or a little know-how helps. I'm no expert but having made my own trophy shields over the years and working with various timbers, I gave it a go a while back. There's always a bit of trepidation about how to disassemble the firearm, will I botch it, will I achieve the desired result and will I be able to put it back together again?

My first attempt on a friend's air rifle surprisingly turned out better than anticipated, followed by a couple of shotgun stocks for the same person which also surprised. Further requests from shooting mates resulted in the refurbishment of a couple of ordinary looking vintage .310 Cadet rifles to a pleasing standard and, as my confidence grew, I became more proficient. Eventually I was refurbishing the stocks on three of my long-held rifles and even trialling barrel and metal blueing touch-ups.

Some firearms with all their wear and tear and marks speak volumes of their past and are best left as-is save for obligatory servicing. For others, vintages as touched on and especially those hand-me-downs that've seen better days, a refurbishment can make a real difference and lift its whole appearance. Some application, patience and persistence is all that's required and the bits and pieces required to do the job are readily obtainable and generally inexpensive.

I've grown fond of the single-shot small Martini action Cadet rifle since it was introduced to me some 10 years ago. I like its simplicity, lightness, dependable falling-block under-lever action, and its history initially as a cadet training rifle from 1891 to 1955 and thereafter sold to the general public. They found particular favour with farmers who had a real need for them to put down livestock, hunt game for the table and pest control.

More recently my good friend Ian, knowing how I favoured these rifles and as he or anyone else in the family was unlikely to use it again, gifted me a .310 Cadet which had been in the family for 60 years. I was indeed grateful. It had seen little if any use and save for some cosmetic gunstock marks was in good overall condition. In many if not most Cadet rifles, the rifling is worn out or pitted and it's a challenge to find one in reasonable shape.

I wanted to use it at the SSAA Big Game Rifle Club at Little River in one of our monthly shooting events and occasionally in the field, so decided to fully refurbish the stock and attend to a small barrel scuff mark near the front sight with touch-up blueing. I hope what follows offers some encouragement and a means for others to give gunstock refurbishment a go.

Firearm disassembly

To free the timber fore-end and butt, carefully remove any screws, pins, barrel band and the like holding the timber to the rifle. Removing the metal buttplate will provide



Sanding the stock in an even side-to-side motion.



Application of damp cloth and hot iron to raise indentations in the stock.



Applying the first coat of Tru-Oil to a fully sanded stock.



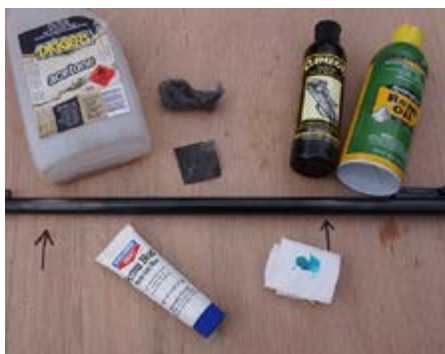
Removing surface rust using wet and dry sandpaper.



The fully restored .310 Cadet rifle.



Cleaning and servicing the action mechanism.



Applying Birchwood Casey Perma Blue Paste Gun Blue to sections of bare metal.

access to a long bolt securing the butt to the rear of the action and will screw out using a long screwdriver. Care should be taken to note where each part fits for proper reassembly later and collect all pieces in a container so as not to lose them.

Now the firearm is in pieces it's a worthwhile exercise to give it a bit of a service, at the same time checking for any rust where metal meets the timber stock. To remove the action itself for cleaning, a slit-pin at its base needs to be taken out before pressing the lever and extracting the mechanism. Using WD-40 or methylated spirits and a brush, clean the action of any foreign matter and lightly oil (the rifling also should be checked and cleaned).

Stock refurbishment

Some stocks have a clear or varnish coating and may require a liquid or spray stripper to reach the bare timber and for such work, hand and eye protection is advisable. Once the raised varnish is sufficiently removed with a plastic scraper or rags, the sanding can commence using a small block or by hand depending on the surface.

Some stocks are worse than others and may require a coarser sandpaper to start with, reducing to a medium grit and finishing with a finer grit of 240 or higher.

You'll acquire a feel for what grit works as you go along, as stocks vary in timber type and hardness, for example American or European walnut is harder than the softer and lighter coloured Claro walnut. If the stock has no such coating the sanding can be applied directly.

Sanding

It's important this is done in an even side-to-side motion along the length of the rifle fore-end and butt, avoiding sanding just scratches or individual spots as noticeable shallow craters will be created. With most of the hard work done, take time to achieve as smooth a surface as possible for the desired result. I've found 240-grit paper provides a good surface texture for gunstock oil to take hold and penetrate (and sufficient for an aesthetically pleasing gloss appearance), though finer sandpaper can be used.

Indentations

Minor scratches and surface marks will be removed during the sanding process but for indentations that sanding won't remove and depending on how deep they are, these can often be raised through the application of a wet cloth and hot iron over the affected area. However, firstly the spot needs to be sanded to expose the raw timber so



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Taking a shine

Disassembled .310 Cadet before restoration.



moisture and heat can penetrate. The timber should swell up fully or to a point, then allow to dry properly before sanding. Deeper gouges can be filled with a spot of sanded dust and wood glue or superglue paste followed by sanding when dry.

Oil finishing

There are good gunstock oils and waxes on the market such as CCL, Birchwood Casey Tru-Oil and others which work well, while some restorers prefer to use boiled linseed oil, beeswax or tung oil with a bit more hand-rubbing effort. Everyone has their own method and having satisfactorily refurbished several gunstocks, I've found Tru-Oil gives excellent results.

Before applying Tru-Oil or similar the container should be vigorously shaken to ensure an even mix. For the first application on bare timber I apply a fairly liberal coat with a piece of clean cloth. While the oil will soak into the timber naturally, I prefer to lightly rub it into the stock in a circular then lengthwise motion along the grain. Best not to go over the treated sections as the oil tends to dry and harden quickly.

Leave the stock to dry for 24 hours or in accordance with the supplier's instructions before repeating the process using a clean cloth each time. I've found further coats can be applied every six to eight hours if the surface is dry to the touch. A light scuff of the overall surface with fine steel wool every couple of coats will also assist. By the sixth or seventh coat a lustrous shine should start to appear then more coats can be added as required. And finally a buffing with a woollen cloth will enhance the gloss finish.

Metal blueing

It's normally recommended barrel and metal blueing is done by a gunsmith but for touch-ups the process is fairly easy and can be performed without special skills at minimal



Disassembled .310 Cadet gifted to Sam.

cost. Often where vintage or less cared-for firearms are concerned minor surface rust or pitting is common. For the former a spray of WD-40 and light brushing with fine steel wool, taking care not to rub into the blueing, will remove most of the surface rust and treat the metal at the same time.

For deeper surface rust or minor pitting, a rust converter and Birchwood Casey Perma Blue Paste can be applied using rubber gloves. The parts need to be rubbed with wet and dry paper to bare metal, rust converter applied to the area then wiped with acetone and allowed to dry before applying bluing paste. Once the paste cakes and changes to a whiteish colour, wipe with a wet cloth and repeat the process until the desired blueing colour depth is achieved. Finally, liberally apply a gun metal oil like Rem Oil, Hoppe's, G96 or similar over the treated sections and allow to sit for 24 hours to enhance the blueing protection.

Conclusion

Every time I refurbish a gunstock and embellish the firearm's overall appearance I feel a sense of satisfaction and achievement, especially when it comes to an old or vintage firearm like a .310 Cadet rifle where I'm extending its longevity. ●



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Eagle rocks!



Dick Eussen salutes the enduring Model 1911

John Browning's long-lived Model 1911 pistol shows no signs of slowing down and there are plenty of offspring, some cheap and nasty with others being fine examples of the pistoleros' metal art. Striker-firing pistols have seriously challenged the Model 1911 but traditionalists continue to fuel the market, knowing the reliability of the legendary old warrior is living up to its reputation of a no-nonsense hammer-strike pistol, introduced as the 1911 Government in .45 calibre, a full-sized handgun which saw years of service with the US Armed Forces.

Browning died 15 years after the US adopted his pistol as a martial item, though police and other enforcement bodies largely ignored it in favour of Smith & Wesson .38 revolvers. It wasn't until the 1970s the

1911 pistol became a serious contender for law enforcement and during that time it dominated IPSC, as civilians invested in the dozens of different brands which had become available.

It's a much copied and improved design which includes the Desert Eagle made by Magnum Research, a branch of the Israel Military Industry who've been at the forefront of research. They currently offer three 1911 9mm models - the full-sized 5" Desert Eagle 1911G, 4.33" Commander Desert Eagle 1911C and 3" Desert Eagle U model, though technically they're the same and only differ in barrel length.

The pistol

My mate Alan Webb invested in a Magnum Research Desert Eagle in 9mm Luger recently, and to date has fired several hundred rounds of full-power Winchester 115, 125 and 147gr ammo along with countless reloads without encountering any problems.

Along with a few SSAA Mareeba Pistol Club stalwarts we gave the gun a full workout on standard SSAA 25m targets, firing more than 150 rounds of the previously mentioned ammo. There were five of us taking turns shooting at targets from a bench, assisted by a Caldwell pistol rest at 15, 20 and 25m. A rest is a must when testing pistols for accuracy and while the Caldwell one is basic, it does a good job when the gun is adjusted to the right height on the butt and barrel positions.

At the end of the session it became clear the 3lb-plus trigger was a handicap as it made small groups difficult, though a couple of us still managed to clock tight 50mm clusters with 'flyers' expanding groups to 75 and 100mm, well within the acceptance of standard 1911 pistols and factory ammunition. This can be fixed by having a gunsmith improve the trigger pull, something I've done with my own 1911 Browning which has a light creep-free trigger, though it has tightened groups considerably.

Heavy triggers are standard on firearms these days due to manufacturers fearing legal repercussions in case of accidental discharges which might be attributed to light triggers. Some trigger systems are simple to adjust but the Model 1911 isn't one of them and the job is best left to an accredited gunsmith.

The Desert Eagle 1911 tested is a single-action self-loading recoil-operated pistol with a 5" barrel. The design is ergonomic as it retains the original beavertail grip safety, slide lock and safety and that comfortably-designed grip found on all Model 1911s. Standard features on the pistol include a stainless-steel bushingless bull match barrel, solid guide rod, G10 grips, crisp skeletonised trigger and hammer, stainless steel beavertail safety, extended lever safety, extended magazine release, lowered and flared ejection port, chequered frame and mainspring housing and slide cocker serrations. The model is available in blue and stainless-steel configurations. Both the 5"G and 4.33" models are fitted with Novak-style sights which are rear adjustable. Two eight-shot single-stack magazines and instructions are included, though six and 10-round magazines are available.

On the range

In use, a charged magazine is inserted and secured in the butt, the slide is pulled back and released which cocks the hammer and chambers a round. The pistol will fire a shot with every pull of the trigger until the magazine is empty. The slide locks into open position when the last shell is ejected and exposes the empty chamber. When a newly-charged magazine is inserted into the butt and secured, the slide can simply be pulled back a touch and released, allowing it to slam forward and chamber a loaded round. It's a simple, no-nonsense system which has withstood the test of time and seen little change from the original.

You should never carry a loaded round in the chamber until you're ready to shoot. When the hammer is fully down it sits directly against the slide and will cock when the slide is forced all the way back, or it can be manually cocked by the thumb if a round is already in the chamber. It also has a half-cock position which can be used to carry the gun with a live round in the chamber, though the manufacturer cautions against this.

The slide release lever is used to lock the slide into 'open' position and can be pushed down to release the slide for chambering a round, or making the pistol safe after the magazine has been removed and

the chamber cleared. As mentioned, the slide stays open after the last round has been fired. When a charged magazine has been introduced, the slide can be released by either pushing the lock lever down or pulling the slide back a touch and letting it go.


All 1911 models have two safeties, one on the grip which is released when held tight, the other a standard manual thumb-operated safety side lever which disengages when pushed down parallel to the slide. Should you need to empty a loaded and cocked 1911, engage the thumb safety release, remove the magazine, release the thumb safety to the 'off' position and pull the slide back to eject the live round. Always visibly inspect a chamber to ensure it's empty.

The pistol has low bore axis coupled with excellent balance which limits muzzle flip due to little leverage being present during recoil, a feature that makes shooting it very comfortable. When held properly the trigger pull is straight to the rear for easy control, while the slide lock safety is positive yet still allows a trained shooter to fire a rapid first shot.


The Desert Eagle 1911 varies from the original design in that it's been upgraded to a speed safety and wider beavertail model grip safety. In line with modern pistols, the Desert Eagle has a cast frame matched to a machined slide, while the forward serrated cocking slide is standard. The butt has a non-slip chequered grip that's relaxed even after a prolonged shooting session.

The Novak-style sights are excellent and offer instant clear and rapid target acquisition. The front post is dovetailed and matches the fully adjustable rear sight. The ejection port is large enough to positively toss shells out to the side and so far, no ejection problems have been encountered. Overall the pistol is well designed and matched with an excellent finish with little evidence of machine marks on parts, even when they're exposed during stripping.


In summary, the gun was 100 per cent reliable during our range session with various types of 9mm ammunition including Winchester, Federal, Sellier & Bellot and handloads. No jams or misfires were experienced with accuracy well within the limits of both pistol and ammunition. My only criticism is that heavy-pull trigger but as mentioned, that can be rectified by a competent gunsmith. All in all this is as fine a mid-ranged prized Model 1911 as you could wish for. ●



The grip is stunning and makes the Desert Eagle stand out.



The adjustable rear sight has an unusual machined pattern, though at arm's length isn't visible.



Typical five-shot group as tested, in line with most 1911 pistols.

Specifications

Model: Desert Eagle 1911

Barrel: 5.01"

Overall length: 8.63"

Height: 5.25"

Width: 1.28"

Weight: 36.2oz

Trigger pull: 3-4lb

Sights: High-profile, drift adjustable rear and dove-tailed front sights

Magazines: Two eight-round

Finish: Matte black

Price: About \$1750

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Hunter **Derek Nugent** on the 'art' of going unseen

I won't be alone in regularly having to defend our legally endorsed ability to participate in gun sports, most notably hunting. I've learned over the years you can't fight ingrained prejudice, ignorance and emotion with rational facts, so seldom broach the topic except with family and like-minded friends. It's a shame but that's the sad reality. Yet occasionally some woke individual will venture an opinion which, due to its sheer audacity, inaccuracy or bloody-minded ignorance necessitates a response which I feel obliged to provide.

One claim which commonly crops up is 'hunting is cruel and the animal doesn't stand a chance', a statement which conveniently overlooks the one-shot kill obligation all ethical hunters endorse. Similarly, it fails to recognise the level of skill required to find, stalk and humanely down a beast.

Most significantly though, it shows blissful ignorance of the finely tuned senses of sight, smell and hearing which all game animals possess and use and, if we're being honest, to regularly outwit us and send us home empty-handed.

Down the years hunters have, in recognition of the superior senses of their quarry, evolved a myriad of tactics to try and negate or at least lessen this significant evolutionary advantage. Simple things such as being well versed in your quarry's biology and behaviour, using wind and terrain to your advantage and being a competent stalker all assist in the provision of a successful hunt. Another important factor to consider is the clothing worn afield, particularly the degree to which you might use camouflage gear to hide in plain sight and close in on your target.

Age-old art

The art of camouflage - and it is an art - has long been a staple of humankind's military and hunting arsenal. Whether it be on an industrial scale in terms of hiding troop concentrations, munitions or infrastructure from prying eyes or something more subtle like masking the presence of a snare, trap or hunting stand from detection, being able to go unnoticed in the field is almost always an essential element of a successful hunt.

While biologists attest the majority of our quarry don't see in colour but moreover in black, white and shades of grey, they're very adept at registering suspicious shapes and outlines, unnatural sheens and reflections and of course movement. It therefore goes without saying that some form of camo gear should really be considered by most hunters and the majority of stalkers and as

A trio of commercially available camo items.





Three examples of traditional DPCU-style military camo.

with all things hunting related, choices and preferences lie with the individual.

With this in mind, manufacturers of hunting apparel offer a huge variety of versatile and durable camo clothing from hats to boots and everything in between. The styles, materials and features incorporated into modern camo are almost limitless. Gone are the days when the only option was ex-military three-colour disruption pattern clothing (DPCU) primarily in greens, black and tan with characteristic semi-regular patches (jelly beans) of colour augmented by the occasional striped overlay.

The market today is dominated by a myriad of 'vegetation' themed patterns incorporating a range of colours from the darkest of greens through to blaze orange. Names like 'mossy oak', 'real tree', 'woodland' and 'buffalo camo' are but a few which would be known to hunters as staple offerings, all of them simple, effective and easy to appreciate. But there has been an evolution in military camouflage across the globe to what are called MultiCam patterns consisting of smaller overlapping blocks which give a sort of pixelated look across colour combinations suited to a variety of terrains.

MultiCam was designed in 2002 to replace existing US Army three-colour camo patterns like 'woodland' and was based on what was described as a seven-colour multi-terrain camo palette. While it saw limited use by some US special forces, it wasn't until 2010 it was widely introduced into the US Army and only in 2019 did an updated variant become the universal combat camo pattern.

The UK uses its own version called Multi-Terrain Pattern (MTP) and in 2014 the ADF partially adopted its own Australian MultiCam Uniform (AMCU) to replace existing Disruption Cam Uniforms (DPCU) or AUSCAM, though the existing AUSCAM colour palette was retained. By 2019 the ADF had fully adopted AMCU as the Australian Army's official uniform and, not surprisingly, some civilian manufacturers have also ventured into this more modern but less traditional form of pattern for their hunting gear. One such entity is the Rocky Boots company of Ohio and their distinctive Venator camo pattern.

Venator: The Hunter

The Rocky Boots company was established in 1932 during the Great Depression by brothers Bill and Mike Brooks and remained a family enterprise until the late 1950s when it was sold to a competitor. But following a downturn the family was able

Some form of camo gear should really be considered by most hunters and the majority of stalkers

to repurchase the business in 1975 and it remains in their hands to this day. In 1979 they introduced the Rocky brand to the US market producing innovative, rugged and dependable high-quality military, outdoors, work and western gear, most notably boots and apparel.

Of particular interest to hunters is the diverse range of outdoor gear available: hats, beanies, gloves, boots, shirts, jackets, coats, trousers and waders, all offering a mix of waterproofing, insulation, camo finishes and scent-blocking options. The brand is well established and highly regarded in the US and is available in Australia both online and in-store.

After several years of research and development including extensive field testing, Rocky released the Venator camo pattern to the market in 2016. The design is aptly named as the Latin word for hunter and is intended to complement hunting across the full terrain scenarios from bare rocky ridgelines, densely dappled forests, verges and tree lines to everything in between. This pattern is not a copy or reimagining of existing camo designs, nor does it retain the vegetation-type motifs favoured by many manufacturers, rather it presents as a civilian interpretation of the military's MultiCam approach to concealment in the field.

Venator camo uses a cast of quasi-geometric shapes - lines, blocks, spheroids and honeycombs - to produce a busy digital pattern with a pixelated or tetris appearance. The pattern it produces looks quite confused and is complemented by a colour palette ranging from the palest of sages through olive drab and browns to black. Colour combinations are inspired by and representative of the wide spectrum of terrains and vegetation types it's designed to blend with.

Personal experience

My experience of Venator camo comes in the form of Rocky's Stratum outdoor jacket (RRP \$190), a grandiose name for a



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A fine and rare best quality 12-bore **PERAZZI O/U** Model SCO pinless sidelock ejector single trigger game gun, 2004, the pinless sidelocks and action body with full coverage of very finely executed foliate scrollwork, two pairs of barrels, the 27 1/2" barrels with 2 3/4" chambers bored cylinder and 3/4 choke, the 28" barrels with 3" chambers bored modified and full, the nicely figured 14 1/2" walnut stock with full pistol grip and rubber recoil pad, factory case with cleaning accessories **\$27,500**

Amazing deeply chisel-engraved 12-bore **JAMES PURDEY & SONS** sidelock ejector heavy game gun with two sets of 28" barrels, 1900s, full coverage of deep scrolling foliage. American game birds, a squirrel, a rabbit and a satyr, factory oak and leather case, a unique exhibition quality KELL-engraved investment set to the American taste in nearly mint factory-refinished condition **\$109,995**

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Hiding in plain sight



Rocky Stratum jacket in Venator pattern camo.

soft-shell coat. I didn't buy it myself, it was gifted to me by family, and while it's not bullet-proof it seems to be standing up well to the limited field use it's had in terms of wear and tear.

The coat is lightweight, comfortable and the material has a soft finish so is silent to wear on an early morning winter stalk. The manufacturer highlights the following as key features: Rocky IQ Atomic which destroys human scent on the microbial level; YKK zippers; moisture wicking and durable water repellent coating (DWR); wind resistant construction and heat retention lining; quilted shoulders and arms for added comfort.

Sizes are generous with a relaxed and non-restrictive fit so arm and upper-body movements remain unrestricted while there's still ample room to 'layer-up' when afield in cold weather. There are also four generous pockets and the two largest at chest height can be securely zipped shut, which lets you confidently carry items like keys, phones, a UHF handset or other pieces of hunting gear with ease. The smaller hip pockets can also be securely zipped and are ideal for warming chilled hands.

Parting thoughts

Overall I'm satisfied with my Stratum jacket with Venator camo livery.

Living in Queensland I've never had to use it in extreme cold but can attest to its suitability in the field on a winter's day. Furthermore, while I can't vouch for Venator camo making me any less visible to animals, unlike other more traditional patterns, it doesn't draw stares or comments if worn in public or out socially. In fact it makes hiding in plain sight from both game and naysayers a pleasant and comfortable proposition in all situations. And you've gotta love that! ●

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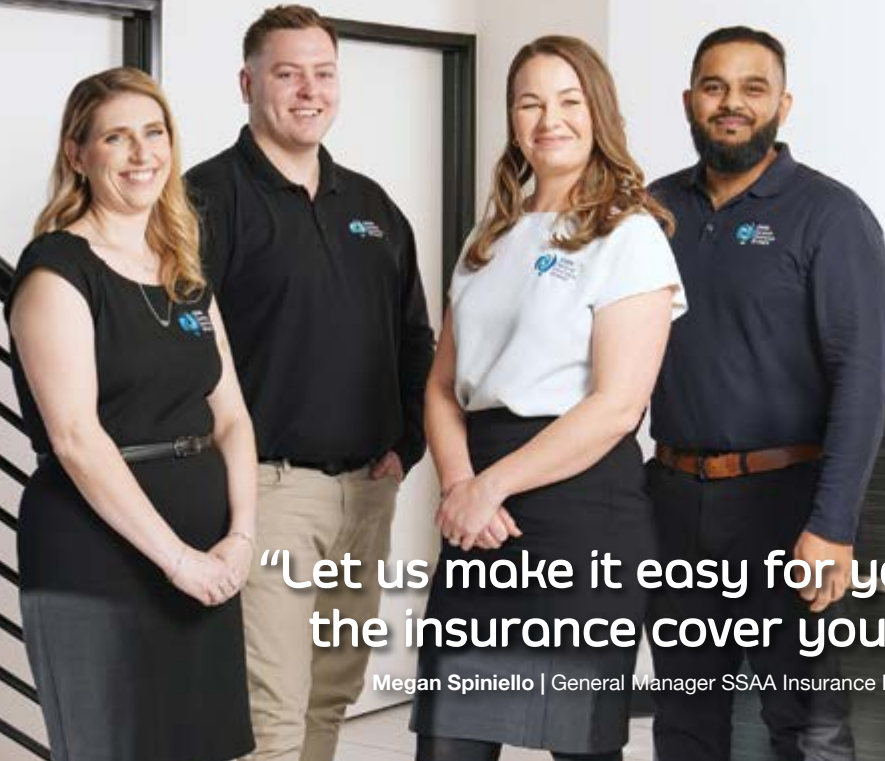
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Design of the rib is raised at the receiver end and 'swamped' the rest of the barrel length.

A touch of *elegance*

John McDougall salutes the little Yildiz 20-gauge

Of the many Turkish brands now available in the Australian gun market, one that stands out for its quality and craftsmanship is Yildiz and while they make some very fine shotguns costing several thousands of dollars, they've kept their market open to less expensive models which cater to the everyday shooter.

Don't get me wrong, the quality and finish on their more expensive offerings has flowed through to their more affordable models, which look to be finished to the same high standards. Industry sources tell me that of the countless number of guns which have come to Australia during the past 15 years, only a handful have been returned for adjustment after purchase, a big tick for any gunmaker. So let's take a closer look at the Yildiz Elegant 20-gauge with its stylish lines, walnut stock and single-trigger ejector mechanical action - I think you may be surprised.

Barrels

At 720mm (28½") these are exceptionally well finished in a deep lustrous blue and offer sleek lines to match the stock and receiver. Bored-out rather than hammer-forged, they're chambered for 76mm

magnum loads which make them capable of firing the same 28-gram loads as its 12-gauge stablemate.

The barrels weigh 1.25kg, quite a reduction when you consider a 12-gauge gun barrel set can top the scales at as much as 1.65 kg. This brings the overall weight of the Yildiz Elegant to 2.62kg (5lb 12oz) which is a significant reduction on its 12-gauge big brother at around 3.4kg (7½lb), making the former far more preferable for use in the field, especially during extended hunts.

The 7mm rib is raised at the receiver and remains several millimetres below the height of the horizontally configured barrels, an interesting design feature which offers a good view of the target at all times. A single brass bead is located at the muzzle and the rib itself has an anti-glare finish, the gun generally well assembled and finished to perfection with no residual solder marks or weeps from flux.

Bore sizes of the barrels look to be standard as do the forcing cones though sadly I don't have a suitable gauge to measure them nor the five chokes supplied and a vernier, which I do have, doesn't really tell the whole story. Bore dimensions are stamped on the monobloc as required for proof of the gun.



A lever mechanism activates the fore-end lock to the barrels.



Barrel selector/safety in the 'safe' position.



Trigger guard design is generous to accommodate shooting gloves.

Receiver

Made from a forged block of 7075 alloy to make the gun even lighter, this is skilfully finished and completed with light engraving along the sides featuring ducks in a swamp. Scroll engraving to the rear of the receiver is tastefully done meaning the gun looks good and is clearly aimed at the waterfowl hunter judging by those engravings. It's interesting to note Yildiz has recessed a replaceable standing plate into the face of the receiver in the event of excessive corrosion should the original ever need replacing, a great idea if using highly corrosive primers.

Design and shape of the trigger guard is excellent with sufficient room to accommodate shooting gloves, fine-scrolled engraving on the underside adding a nice touch. The trigger foot isn't adjustable and the mechanism is mechanically cocked rather than inertia, perfect for the field shooter's follow-up shot should the first misfire.

A barrel selector is an excellent inclusion with the option of shooting left or right first, something which comes into effect when you have an incoming or departing target. For the latter the more open-choked barrel can be fired first while the tighter choke is preferred for an incoming target. Position of the barrel selector/safety catch is perfect and despite being scaled down from a 12-gauge gun, this is one feature which maintains a reasonable size.

The top lever is excellent, well designed and moves with just enough resistance to facilitate opening the gun without too much pressure. I enjoy shooting double guns because the gape as the barrels drop down is less than an over-and-under, meaning double guns can be loaded quicker when the shooting is fast and furious.

Stock and fore-end

Stocked with above-average Turkish walnut and complemented by an oil finish, the Yildiz Elegant 20-gauge lives up to its name with excellent metalwork and above average woodwork and if I sound impressed, that's because I am. Fitted with a thin-line rubber recoil pad, the makers have seemingly thought of everything we expect of such an elegant sporting arm.

The gun is fitted with a Schnabel-style fore-end instead of the thinner 'splinter' which provides plenty of grip when using heavier field loads. Both fore-end and stock are checkered at around 18 lines/inch to enhance that grip even further, coverage more than ample with the fore-end conveniently released via a lever system on the underside.

In the field

Whether shooting quail or over the traps at clay targets, the Yildiz Elegant is a treat to use, unforgiving on clays which were reduced to dust using the ¼ and ¾ choke combination. A friend at my gun club on Phillip Island took his fine Italian superposed shotgun back to the 25-yard line where the little Yildiz matched its capabilities and even moving back to 50 yards, the odd target could still be demolished.

Shooting the same chokes in the Yildiz while hunting quail, I was amazed as birds out to 45 yards were dropped, some only requiring a single pellet of Remington 9 shot to achieve the outcome. It's been a few years since I'd enjoyed the quail hunting offered last season with such an abundance of birds.

The Yildiz double with its awesome power using 28-gram loads of Remington

Specifications

Maker: Yildiz, Turkey.

Model: Yildiz Elegant ASE 20g side-by-side.

Distributor: Raytrade.

Overall length: 1155mm (45½")

Barrel length: 720mm (28½")

Weight: 2.6kg (5lb. 12oz).

Bore size and diameter: 20ga, nominal 0.615"

Chamber: 76mm (3")

Stock dimensions: Drop at comb 38mm, drop at heel 60mm, length of pull 370mm.

Chokes: Five choke tubes included with flat spanner.

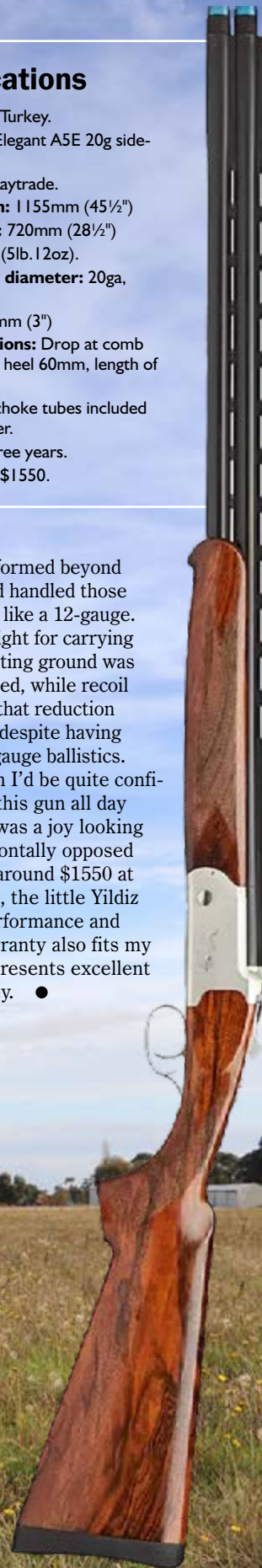
Warranty: Three years.

Price: Around \$1550.

9 certainly performed beyond expectation and handled those brisk 28g loads like a 12-gauge. Its reduced weight for carrying around our hunting ground was much appreciated, while recoil resulting from that reduction wasn't a factor despite having equivalent 12-gauge ballistics.

In conclusion I'd be quite confident shooting this gun all day in the field. It was a joy looking over two horizontally opposed barrels and at around \$1550 at time of writing, the little Yildiz with its big performance and three-year warranty also fits my budget and represents excellent value for money. ●

John with his Brittany Spaniel, Remington, and a small bag of quail.



Zoom ^{WITH} _A view

ZeroTech Trace binos worth a look, says Nick Rositano



A perfect vantage point.

New to the market from ZeroTech are their flagship Trace 15x56 ED binoculars. Through their expertise and knowledge garnered from more than 50 years in the optics industry, ZeroTech have developed riflescopes and binoculars which are among the most reliable and affordable out there.

Unboxing the Trace binos I noticed a pledge on the box which states: 'Lifetime warranty, any owner, any problem, always covered', as ZeroTech are one of the few manufacturers who offer this protection. Knowing your purchase is covered by a lifetime warranty gives added insurance that ZeroTech really do back all their products.

Down the years I've mainly used 10x42 binoculars in the field though of late have noticed that sometimes glassing up a gully trying to distinguish deer or other animals can be quite challenging, especially when it comes to identifying antlers. It was time I moved to longer-range binos which could push the boundaries. With the Trace 15x56 EDs you immediately see the quality, engineering and craftsmanship that's gone in to creating these binoculars. Holding them for the first time, their ergonomic rubber armour moulds into your hand, making for a comfortable feel and excellent grip.

They give total clarity and field of view and are waterproof for added peace of mind in extreme weather. They have a smooth, fast-focus wheel and high-quality caddy to protect the lenses and come standard with a large premium flip-top binocular harness and shoulder strap. With a couple of spare pouches on the side of the harness as well as a zipper pocket at the front, you can carry various items whether hunting, hiking or bird-watching. Many optics manufacturers sell the harness separate which is another added cost, though that's not the case with ZeroTech.

It was time to put them to the test and I'd a hunting trip organised to hopefully bag a deer to restock the freezer. First up was to gauge just how well they worked in

lowlight conditions, especially at dusk and dawn, as I've owned plenty of entry level binoculars down the years and found them to perform poorly in those circumstances. I set out around half an hour before first light, reached the spot I'd planned and found myself in a comfortable position for glassing just before daybreak. With dawn approaching I started scouting in search of any animal movement.

About a couple of hundred metres away I was able to make out a pair of does feeding on the lucerne which my naked eye couldn't spot, so I hatched a plan to take one as soon as the light was good enough. Having binoculars which let you distinguish your quarry at dusk and dawn is the difference between a successful and unsuccessful hunt in my opinion, as there's nothing worse than bumping animals which the naked eye can't see in lowlight conditions. Glassing around the property I was able to spot potential targets at 500m with ease.

The benefit of having larger-powered

binoculars as opposed to 10x42s means not only is the field of view longer it's also wider, which helps identify animals at greater distances and these binos would be ideal for hunters and bird-watchers who want to be able to cover those longer distances. I found the focus wheel near the front lenses to be smooth, fast and quick to adjust to your eye for the clearest field of view possible.

After some extended time in the field with them I was extremely impressed by just how well they performed. ZeroTech have engineered a quite magnificent binocular that's at the cutting-edge of design and technology, up there with the top-performing manufacturers but at a substantial reduction in cost, though it pays to shop around (they're also an Australian company). I suggest anyone looking at buying a pair of binoculars give the ZeroTech Trace series some serious consideration - I'm sure you won't be disappointed. ●



On the look-out for potential targets.



Stick-in-the-mud!

Senior correspondent
John Dunn finally got
lucky after 40 years

The recovered head - long, wide and heavy and the sort of sambar trophy John has been seeking for more than four decades.

It's a hunting truism that when you see a particularly good example of whatever it is you're looking for, you won't need a second look to confirm it. That's how it was with the sambar stag but I had another look at him through my 10x50 Swarovski binoculars anyway, just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. I wasn't. Long and wide with tatters of velvet hanging off his antlers, he was the class of stag I've been searching for most of my hunting life. From that point on all I had to do was work out how I'd close the gap between us.

I was hunting farm fringe country where most of the trees had been cleared long ago to maximise grass production. A scattering of remnant trees and some shallow natural contour lines were all that was available by way of cover. Compounding that problem was a herd of flighty Hereford steers, spread randomly over the two paddocks below where I was sitting, preventing a round-about stalk which may have been possible if they weren't there. They'd give the game away as soon as they saw me, just as they had when I last hunted here.

That left me with a direct approach

through open country, hoping the swirling evening breeze wouldn't carry my scent before me, so all I could do was take that chance and hope Lady Luck would smile this time instead of sneering. When the stag fed out of sight behind the trunk of a large peppermint gum in the next paddock down, the dog and I slithered under the electric boundary fence and began our downhill scuttle, ready to go to ground should the stag re-appear. He didn't, mostly because he was no longer in sight when I finally peered carefully around the trunk of a covering tree.



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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.



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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



24 INCH BARREL

ROVER ALASKAN WITH AICS MAGAZINE

\$2,190 SRP

CALIBRES

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.30-06 Springfield | .308 Winchester
.300 Winchester Magnum
.338 Winchester Magnum

FEATURES

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Stick-in-the-mud!

About 100 metres below the top fence of that bottom paddock the trunk of a wind-thrown tree lay across the slope. It was a big log, easily high enough to hide the stag if he was still on the down-slope side. On that basis we carefully shifted sideways to another multi-trunked tree I hoped might provide a different perspective. It didn't and there was still no deer.

With no other option available we waited and hoped all was not lost. The evening dribbled away, light began to fade as the breeze swirled erratically until, almost miraculously, the line of the deer's back and tips of his antlers showed above the top edge of that log. Slowly, ever so slowly, he fed into the clear and just when I thought he'd give me some shoulder to shoot at he lifted his head, looked around then fed back the other way.

From down on the river flats three Herford steers came mooching up the hill. Their leader was obviously watching the sambar and I wondered if their approach might be enough to make him move again. It didn't take long to find out. Like a bunch of barnyard bullies they began to crowd him up against the log, seemingly determined to move him along. I saw him toss his antlers then turn and disappear, only to re-emerge on my side of the log a few moments later.

He was walking broadside to me with a pushy steer on his tail when I put the crosshair just forward of his shoulder and squeezed off my single-shot. At around 180 metres I heard the 270 grain .375 H&H factory load connect as the deer went down, yet in the few seconds it took me to reload the Ruger he was back on his feet and making his way through the other cattle which made a follow-up shot impossible. As it was almost dark and feeling sure he'd be on his last legs, I made the decision to walk away, confident we'd pick up his trail in the morning.

Overnight it rained, a genuine mountain deluge which rattled the roof of the hut for hours and made sleeping nigh impossible. It had cleared by morning but when we returned to where we'd last seen the stag, the slate had been washed clean. There was no sign anywhere. During the next two days the dog and I wore ourselves out, searching diligently without success with the one bright spot in our quest being a cast antler I almost tripped over in the mud of the gully bottom.

The rest of the winter slipped away unhunted due to ongoing commitments in other places and the day-to-day existence of the Long Covid experience which has left my Good Lady well below her best with no end in sight. Then came a stroke of luck.



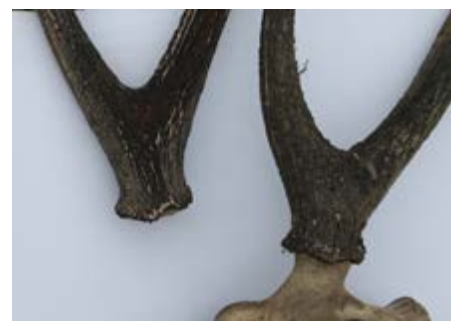
Remains of the stag where he came to rest in the bottom of the gully. Photo: Adam Garraway

Some 10 weeks after the fact the landholder rang me one night with good news - another hunter who was working the same area had found the stag. The size and shape of head didn't match what he was after so he made an enquiry to the landholder and learned about me losing my stag. He promised he'd bring the head back for me next time he came up to hunt, so two weeks later I collected it and will be forever grateful for the honesty and integrity of the other hunters involved. I thought I'd never see it again.

Adam Garraway, the hunter who found it, took me back into the gully and showed me where the stag's remains were - he'd made it little more than 30 metres from where I'd last seen him alive. He was in some creek-bottom blackberries, partially buried in mud and flood debris and screened by some skinny reeds. We must've walked within metres of him half a dozen times during our search and how I didn't see him or Dixie didn't smell him is something I'll never understand.

He was and is the kind of stag I've spent the past 40-plus years looking for. There were times when I never thought I'd achieve that goal but when sambar hunting you never know, so you keep going and hope your fortunes will change. I'm especially lucky the hunter who found him was appreciative enough of the stag's quality to make the effort and find out who he might belong to, as plenty of others would've collected the head and walked away.

The icing on the cake was the cast antler I found no more than 10 metres from where the stag came to rest. When I compared it to the still-attached right antler, the shape and size and pearling around the edge of the coronets matched almost perfectly and no-one will ever convince me it's not one he'd cast the previous year. Where my sambar hunting goes from here is anyone's guess. ●



The coronet on the cast antler matched the one on the attached right antler almost perfectly.



The cast antler alongside John's sambar rifle, a No.1 Ruger in .375 H&H.

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R95 TRAPPER



CALIBRE	STOCK	BARRELL	CAPACITY
.30-30	WALNUT	16.5" BLACK OXIDE	5+1

R95 TRIPLE BLACK



CALIBRE	STOCK	BARRELL	CAPACITY
.30-30	BLACK WOOD	16.5" BLACK OXIDE	5+1

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A night in shining armour

Australian Shooter editor **Allan Blane** has been back in the 'old country'

Towards the end of last year I toured Europe for a while and returned to Scotland, the country of my birth, where I spent an evening at Culzean Castle (pronounced cull-ain), a majestic building completed in the late 1700s around the time Captain Cook landed in Australia. I was born and raised on the west coast, about 20 miles from Culzean, and it's a place I visited many times in my younger days.

Built on a cliff overlooking the Firth of Clyde, the castle is largely the work of renowned Scottish architect Robert Adam and was once home to the Marquess of Ailsa though is now under the auspices of the National Trust for Scotland. While a popular attraction in its own right, it's probably best known outside of tourism and historical circles for being a focal point of *The Wicker Man*, a 1973 cult film starring Christopher Lee and Britt Ekland (Lee cited the movie as his favourite from the more-than 275 he appeared in).

But it's the castle's armoury that's of real interest to firearms enthusiasts. In 1812 Archibald Kennedy, the 12th Earl of Cassilis, bought a huge collection of firearms and associated armoury from the Office of Ordnance at the Tower of London, as by that point they were obsolete technology and of no further use to the British Army and the East India Company.

The collection arrived in 12 chests along with 'one of the men from the Tower with the arms who will fix them up in a proper manner'. Added to over the years, the collection is second only in size and prestige in the UK to the one now owned by King Charles at Windsor Castle.

There are more than 700 pistols (24 different kinds) and one of the patterns on display features 111 hilts for single-edge swords, once used by foot soldiers for engaging the enemy at close quarters. There's also a selection of display cannons, made by apprentices from the castle boatyard and used as starting guns for the popular yacht races of the day. One of the gardeners who tended the extensive grounds was quoted in 1930 as saying: "The odd-job man looked after the armoury and was hard worked as he had to clean and oil all the weapons."

Also on display is the impressive propeller which powered the B.E.2c biplane flown by Lt William Leefe Robinson who, in 1916, became the first airman to shoot down a German airship over Britain during the First World War. Robinson was also the first person to be awarded the Victoria Cross for action in the UK.

If any of our readers ever find themselves on the west coast of Scotland, I highly recommend a tour of the 250 year-old castle where, armoury aside, the history of the building itself makes for a fascinating couple of hours. ●



Can any reader shed some light on this mystery gun?



Culzean Castle houses the second-biggest armoury in the UK.



These display cannons were made by boatyard apprentices.



Will expensive 'target on guns' achieve public safety promise?

Rachael Oxborrow

A series of news and opinion articles entitled Target on Guns in *The Australian* led a charge of commentary on topics surrounding legal and illegal firearms in our country late last year. This series of articles was timed around the 12-month anniversary of the tragic Wieambilla shootings, where a trio of Christian extremists committed an act of domestic terrorism which resulted in loss of life.

It was also highlighting the almost 12-month anniversary of the Federal Government committing to a National Firearms Register database, bringing together state and territory firearms registries. This move was attributed to the improvement of public safety by ensuring law enforcement can have full access to all details relevant to their work without the separation of information by jurisdictions.

The coverage culminated with state and territory leaders calling for a funding boost, as foreshadowed by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA Inc) in its response to the National Firearms Register consultation in April 2023. Ultimately the federal wallet was opened and an agreement reached between state and territory leaders. The Attorney-General's Department advises that processes have begun to launch this four-year project which media reports indicate could cost around \$250 million.

Current state and territory-based registries are all fundamentally different in the way they operate, the way data is entered and in consistency of records. There will be a significant hangover from updating these systems which will take a generation to remedy in terms of addressing errors that go hand-in-hand with human entry and a lack of consistent data entry requirements since the introduction of these systems.

SSAA Inc expects transparency around the amount of money being spent to carry out these upgrades and would suggest public safety improvements could also be made through further investment into resourcing our police forces to target the criminal element and illegal firearm use. We do not support increasing regulation of our already highly policed section of the Australian community who undergo onerous checks and balances to own firearms to use in their sport, recreation and legitimate pest control activities.

Tightening firearms laws which directly relate to firearm ownership will only ever impact the law-abiding, as the criminal element of society will not bother following regulatory processes. This is abundantly clear as discussed extensively by the Australian Institute of Criminology and in a recent Deakin University study. Any new legislation concerning firearms needs to focus on public safety benefits and prevent the occurrence of unintended consequences from policy decisions affecting our community. The Australian Institute of Criminology (Ref.1) gives a key indication of where efforts should be made as follows:

"(A) majority of firearms used to commit homicide were not registered and the perpetrators of firearm-related homicide were not licensed firearms owners. Those who commit homicide in Australia are individuals who have circumvented legislation and will be least likely to be affected if further restrictions on firearms ownership are introduced. Any further restrictions will most likely affect individuals who are the law-abiding shooters in Australia who've already made significant sacrifices in furtherance of public safety."

Furthermore, a 2022 Deakin University study (Ref.2) illuminates the real problem this country has with illegal firearms. The study outlines that a cohesive network

of career criminals who value trust and secrecy as paramount to conducting their unlawful dealings is running a thriving illicit gun trade. Researchers discovered it was also "surprisingly easy" for criminals to buy firearms through Australia's 'black market' despite the country's strict gun laws.

Some of the media coverage during this period involved topics of relevance to SSAA state and territory members and comment was provided. Other stories touched on topics not directly relevant but our relationship with the journalists involved allowed for background context and feedback.

Among the articles where SSAA Inc provided comment included a spotlight on range safety and the growing junior demographic in target shooting along with the need for tangible public safety outcomes as a result of this significant investment of federal funds. SSAA Inc remains committed to representing state and territory members and the wider firearms industry in the development and functionality of this system through its ongoing relationship with the Federal Government and its relevant departments.

Ref.1: Mouzos J, 2000. The licensing and registration status of firearms used in homicide. Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice No.151. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Ref.2: David Bright, Mark Halsey, Andrew Goldsmith and Sharyn Goudie (2023) - I Know a Guy and He's Got Guns Galore: Accessing Crime Guns in the Australian Illicit Firearms Market, *Deviant Behaviour*, 44:5, 671-689. ●



NEW CZ TS 2 ORANGE



RRP \$5,150

A championship-level sport pistol developed in close cooperation with elite shooters on the CZ Shooting Team. Its parameters have been primarily optimized for competing in the IPSC Standard division, but like other pistols in the CZ TS 2 series, it can also be used for other shooting disciplines.

Features:

- New "bull" barrel for increased accuracy, better control and a significantly longer service life
- Hand-fitted barrel-to-slide and slide-to-frame for the tightest tolerances
- CZ Shadow 2 style front sight attachment system for quick and easy sight removal
- Extra serrations on top front edge of slide ensure more comfortable cocking
- Higher positioned ambidextrous safeties
- Reduced height magazine release button
- Modified recoil spring guide that simplifies disassembly
- 10rd magazine capacity
- Fibre optic front sight and checkered rear sight
- Steel frame with duralumin grip
- Safety notch on the hammer; manual safety





Pull a fast one

Full set-up with awning.

Ben Unten assembles a double swag in 30 seconds

New South Wales-based Oztent have released the RS-2 double swag, a generous product with impressive features including a skillion-type roof and awning, though perhaps the biggest advertising claim is the '30-second set-up' which I was keen to put to the test.

Specifications

The Oztent RS-2 is 1970mm long, 650mm wide and 300mm high, weighs roughly 20kg and is of ModCan 300D ripstop polyester material, claimed to be certified CPAI-84 fire resistant and rated UV50+. The interior frame includes scissor-type hingeing which means you don't have to assemble poles or hoops for the swag itself, simply slide the scissor-hinged frame along until it hits the stop then secure it against accidental collapse with integral Velcro straps against the inside of the swag.

The RS-2 comes with two twist-lock poles for the awning and I was impressed by the quality of the heavy-duty pegs and ropes with tension hooks. The swag boasts

a large meshed window, ventilation ports, handy interior storage bag and attachment points for lights.

In the field

This is a well thought-out piece of equipment from its multiple semi-hidden, additional meshed vents, which also have a thicker-sewn canvas lip and prop to help keep them open, to the canvas pouches around the perimeter to carry additional fixed ropes and it seemed the more I looked, the more additions I found.

The Oztent RS-2 has some heft but three integral carry handles make it easy to manoeuvre into position. The initial set-up obviously takes more than 30 seconds, especially if you think you know better and don't refer to the illustrated manual first, yet once I'd read the instructions the task was quick. I installed the supplied 40mm-thick segmented mattress and erected the awning. Set-up size is generous at around 2000mm wide, 1550mm deep and 1450mm high with the awning roughly 2000mm wide and 1300mm deep.

During the day and in good weather I raised the awning for easier access but in wet conditions and at night I lowered it to prevent rain from pooling on the roof. You could also just lower one pole so the roof has 'cross-fall' which would achieve the same outcome. The Oztent has a series of clever mesh-covered vents which significantly assist with airflow and will be of real benefit in warmer months. Even the mesh material has been well thought out as the



Hidden side vents with a stiffened canvas strap to hold them open.



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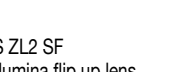
Leupold VX-3HD 4.5-14x40 CDS-ZL Silver Duplex. Was \$1295.....**NOW \$1100**



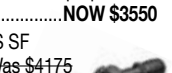
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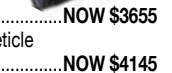
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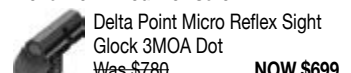
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Integral frame slides into place

The integral frame slides into place for securing.

windows and zip-up front door feature a 'no-see-um' mesh, meaning you can easily look out but it's harder to see in so you have some privacy around other campers.

Another point worth noting is the generous headroom and if you've ever tried to remove a jacket or jumper in a standard swag when it's raining, you'll know what I mean. Which brings us to perhaps one of the biggest plusses of the RS-2 double swag. Everyone who sleeps in a swag (and

I've used them exclusively in the bush for more than 10 years) will have had to find a solution to the age-old question: What do you do with your boots at night? I've tried standard plastic bags, quality canvas ones and PVC zip-up bags, all with varying degrees of success.

These days I choose to erect a tarp over the whole sleeping area which not only keeps my boots dry but also my bedding (try getting into a standard swag in heavy rain and you'll know what I mean). But the design brilliance of the RS-2 is the front awning effectively means you have your own 'mudroom' in the bush. It's generous enough you can easily remove wet clothing and footwear and hang it up or leave it undercover overnight while you climb into your cozy sleeping bag.

If I was being picky the 40mm mattress

is comfortable enough, though for my bones I suspect I might be throwing a yoga mat underneath for a little extra cushioning. While the unit is somewhat bulky, the speed of set-up and quality of components more than compensates for this.

Overall I was seriously impressed by the design of the Oztent RS-2 double swag and can understand why it was awarded an international Good Design Award. To answer the big question about it being a 30-second set-up, I conducted a series of time trials and yes, it's easily achievable though you need to have unzipped the carrying bag, which I think could also double as a groundsheet if required. Without rushing I averaged 28 seconds for set-up which is pretty impressive. The Oztent RS-2 retails for \$1199. More at www.oztent.com.au ●



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Grycol lands prestigious Tanfoglio contract

Rod Pascoe



The 22L is a competition grade single-action pistol.

New South Wales-based firearms importer and distributor Grycol International has announced they're now carrying the Tanfoglio range of handguns. Stuart Collibee, manager of sales, technical support and training, said the brand is an excellent addition to Grycol's line-up of fine imported pistols. "We were appointed as exclusive Australian importers and distributors in July 2023 after visiting SHOT and IWA shows, following lengthy negotiation with the Italian firearms giant," he told *Australian Shooter*. "We carry other well-known brands but wanted to add to the diversity of our extensive range of pistols, especially for the target shooting market in Australia."

Grycol was established in 1967 and in 1985 was appointed exclusive distributor and service centre for Smith & Wesson revolvers and pistols in Australia. Grycol is also distributor of well-known firearms such as Pardini target pistols, another fine Italian brand specialising in the ISSF disciplines along with Pietta single-action and black powder revolvers. "Between these brands, Tanfoglio slots in nicely catering to action and practical matches such as IPSC, Steel Challenge, Action Pistol, WA1500 and Service Pistol events," said Stuart.

"Within each of these disciplines there are many divisions or categories, each requiring a pistol or revolver meeting certain technical specifications. The 16 pistols in the Tanfoglio range are all designed and manufactured with this in mind, so for a pistol to meet Open Division specifications for example, we have a Tanfoglio model ready to shoot straight out of the box."

The Tanfoglio company was born in 1969, specialising its production in designing and manufacturing self-loading pistols in

different calibres for Defence. In 1986 they began construction of models for sports shooting, especially IPSC and IDPA competitions in their different categories. This led to global success for their products in winning the title of IPSC World and European Champion since 1998 until now.

Nowadays their products are a benchmark of excellence for fans and shooters worldwide, with Tanfoglio pistols also being the preferred choice for many police and security professionals. High quality is the result of skill, passion and continuous research and development in ongoing dynamic balance between tradition and innovation.

Among the range is the Stock 2 Optic which is the latest of the Stock 2 generation pistols. Engineers at Tanfoglio came up with a 'plate' system which allows removal of the traditional rear sight plate and gives the shooter the option of using the pistol in Production division with a traditional front and rear sight system, or IPSC Production Division Optics by removing the rear sight plate and fitting a miniature reflex sight to the pistol. These plates fit a number of the more popular reflex sight systems designed specifically for the IPSC Production Optics division. Available in .38 Super and 9mm Luger, the Stock 2 Optic has a 120mm polygonal barrel.

Also, some 1911-style handguns again fit specific requirements for target divisions such as Classic in IPSC and Single Stack in Steel Challenge matches. The FT1911 pistols are available in 9mm or the venerable 45ACP calibres and are 'competition ready' straight out the box. Featuring a competition trigger, adjustable rear sights, ambidextrous safeties, mag well and G10-style grips, all the major desirables are already fitted to the FT1911 pistol.

While the range of centrefire pistols are all steel-framed, there's one polymer-framed option in Grycol's catalogue. The 22L is a competition grade, single-action .22LR handgun with fully adjustable rear sights and interchangeable custom front sight, with a distinctive black frame and red aluminium slide along with an impressive 132mm barrel.

The other thing to note is the vast range of spare parts and accessories Grycol carries to support all their brands including Tanfoglio. Additionally, aftermarket parts manufacturer Tandemkross is also distributed by Grycol, giving shooters many options to enhance their investment. The Grycol team includes a US-trained and accredited gunsmith not only to handle repairs but also perform custom work and gun-tuning. I'm particularly impressed by the variety of handguns and the versatility to be able to turn a 'Limited' category pistol for instance into 'Open' by simply changing the slide and barrel, similarly for converting 'Production' to 'Limited'. Conversion kits for the Domina and Gold Custom range will be available.

Your local gun shop will help you out with pricing and ordering while looking at the Grycol and Tanfoglio websites, readers will have a better understanding of what goes into producing these fine pistols and what has made the brand so appealing to target shooters around the world. ●



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These custom-made bush kettles run on a few twigs and leaves and will boil water in less than 10 minutes. Simply take a handful of twigs/leaves and kindling then place under the kettle and light it - the clever design directs heat into the kettle to boil the water.

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National

Australian Sporting Clays National Championship

February 3-4, 2024
T42 Riddell Range, 770 Woodsdale Rd Runnymede, Tasmania. Program: Saturday 3rd - 100 targets; Sunday 4th - 100 targets. Nominations open via postage. MCMS opening soon. Rules: Current version of National shotgun rules. Be aware of rule changes. Prizes: Medallions, sashes and raffles open over the weekend. You must be present to win raffle prizes. Facilities: Unpowered campsites with toilets/laundry. No showers or campfires. Fully catered canteen all weekend. Event Contact: Dale Foggo dalepest@msn.com or 0408361638.

National 5 Stand Clay Target Championships

February 10-11, 2024
SSAA Tasmania (T42) Riddell Range, 770 Woodsdale Rd, Runnymede, Tasmania.
Program: Saturday and Sunday 100 targets each. Nominations by post with cheque or via MCMS after November. Nominations on the day will incur a late fee. Rule book 4.3 to apply. There are modified rules so please read up on them. Sashes, medallions and prizes with lucky entry raffle. Range has camping, with toilets/laundry, hot water but no showers. No campfires allowed. Contact Dale Foggo on dalepest@msn.com or 0408 361 638.

SSAA Gallery Rifle National Championships

March 2-3, 2024
SSAA Ipswich, Millmerran Downs, Qld
Program: March 1: Practice; March 2: 50m Precision, T&P 1, 1500 Match; March 3: Multi-target, Granet, 1020 Match in Classic. Prizes: National medals for 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Facilities: Accommodation units on-site, camping available. Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070.

SSAA National Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 23-25, 2024
Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birralee Road, Westbury, TAS
Program: Friday practice after 12pm. Saturday Match 1 Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Sunday Match 2 Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Monday Match 3 Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Presentations to follow. Matches follow current SSAA Lever Action Official National Rules. Fees include breakfast and lunch each day for competitors. Small fee for non-competitors. Camping with toilets, tank water, no electricity or fires. Entry form from admin@westburys shooting.club Fees direct deposit or cash/cheque. Contact Steve Collins 0459 834 885 or via above email address. Fees: Adults \$30/match or \$80 all. Juniors \$10/match or \$25 all. Full details on SSAA National website.

Field Rifle, 3P, NRA and Scoped Air Rifle National Championships

March 27-April 1, 2024
SSAA Gladstone, Qld
Program: See National website for full event details and nomination form. Facilities: Breakfast, lunch and dinner available to order on website for all days. Contact: gladstone@ssaaqld.org.au

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

March 28-April 1, 2024
SSAA Riddell Range, Tasmania
Program: March 28: Practice from 2pm; 29: Hunting Rifle; 30: Centrefire; 31: Rimfire; April 1: Air Rifle (all 80shots). Facilities: Canteen Thursday-Monday, free camping (no power). Contact: Leon O'Brien 0428 495 110 or email disciplines@ssaatas.com.au

Muzzleloading National Championships

March 29-April 1, 2024
SSAA Para range, SA
Program: See National website for full event details. Medals for first three in each event, trophies for aggregate winners. Facilities: Limited camping and caravan spaces, call to book a site. Toilets and showers, canteen for lunch each day. Contact: Michael Nicholas 0467 763 716.

Black Powder Cartridge Rifle National Championships

April 2, 2024
SSAA Riddell Range, Tasmania
Program: 9am sight-in/practice, 9.45 briefing, 10am 40-shot match. Contact: Leon O'Brien 0428 495 110 or email disciplines@ssaatas.com.au

NSW

Handgun Rendezvous

February 2-4, 2024
Windamere Shooting Complex, NSW
Program: Two Black Powder matches, six main Handgun matches (count towards score in your nominated category), full details on National website. Facilities: Free basic camping for tents/caravans with toilets and showers, lunches and drinks for sale, range dinner for purchase Saturday night. Contact: Graham Roberts 0429 839 622 or grahamroberts5@gmail.com.

Qld

SSAA Qld Long Range Precision Championship

May 24-26, 2024
Host: SSAA Luna, Captain's Mountain Complex
Program: 23 May range open for Zero checking 2pm. 24th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 1 Rimfire 150m on Mini-core Target; Match 2 - Rimfire 250m on Mini-core Target. 25th - 8am sign-on; 9am start. Match 3 - Centrefire 500m on Mini-core Target; Match 4 - Centrefire 600m on Mini-core Target. 26th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 5 - Centrefire 800m on Core Target; Match 6 - Centrefire 1000m on Core Target.

Nominations from SSAA website. Send to Secretary: luna@ssaaqld.org.au or PO Box 101, Inglewood, Qld 4387. Rimfire: \$50, Centrefire: \$60, all events \$80, single event \$25, juniors half price. Pay by 25 May. Cash on the day. Event is for Rimfire and/or Centrefire Class A or Class H of the Rifle Field Events. SSAA Long Range Precision Shooting Official Rule Book No. 1 applies. State medals for 1st-3rd for Rimfire, Centrefire Class A and Class H and Juniors, Aggregates and Teams medals. Cabins and camping available. See SSAA website for pricing. Contact: Richard White (07) 4652 4270.

Tas

SSAA Tasmania State Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 9-11, 2024
Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birralee Road, Westbury, TAS
Program: Friday practice after 12pm. Saturday Match 1 Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Sunday Match 2 Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Monday Match 3 Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Presentations to follow. Matches follow current SSAA Lever Action Official National Rules. Entrance fees include breakfast and lunch each day for competitors. Small fee for non-competitors. Basic camping with toilets only. Tank water, no electricity and no fires. Entries available from admin@westburys shooting.club Fees direct deposit or cash/cheque on the day. Contact Steve Collins on 0459 834 885 or the above email. Fees: Adults \$30/match or \$80 total. Juniors \$10/match or \$25 total. Full details on SSAA National website.

Gallery Rifle State Championship

March 16, 2024
Riddell Range Complex, Tasmania
Program: 9am sight-in; 9.45am briefing; 10am 50m Precision, Tand P, Multi-target, 1500, 1020 Classic. No canteen available. Contact: Anderw Judd 0418 734 008 or email namovlov@bigpond.com

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Air Rifle Silhouette State Championships

September 15, 2024
Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, SSAA Springvale, Vic
Program: 80 shots, 9.15am practice, 10.15am start. Medals for first three in each grade. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

September 19-22, 2024
Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic
Program: Thursday set-up and sight-in, Friday 80-shot rifle, Saturday 80-shot pistol, Sunday 80-shot smallbore. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: On-site camping and café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 25-26, 2024
Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic
Program: Saturday 80 targets centrefire, Sunday 80 targets rimfire, sight-in Friday from 12.30pm. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: On-site camping and café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

WA

SSAA (WA) Target Pistol State Championships

March 23-24, 2024
Port Bouvard Pistol Club, Dawesville, WA
Program: March 23: Any rimfire pistol 900 match, any CF revolver, distinguished revolver. March 24: Mayleigh rimfire pistol, any centrefire pistol 900 match, M9 match (Beretta 92). Facilities: Tea and coffee, lunch available (\$10 each day), onsite camping (request at time of nomination). Contact: Gary Paterson 0437 387 452 or Ronnie Pope 0459 545 374.

SSAA (WA) Benchrest Centrefire State Championships

May 25-June 3, 2024
Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: May 25: 300yds Heavy Bench; 26: Unlimited; June 1: Sporter; 2: Light Bench; 3: Heavy Bench. Medals for top three in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun and four-gun. Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue facilities, limited power, canteen not available. Contact: Trevor 0417 085 528 or benchrestwa@iinet.net.au or Dave 0400 205 892 or benchrest@jarrahdaleshooters.org.au

SSAA (WA) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

July 4-7, 2024
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Thursday, July 4: Practice. Friday: Rifle Match. Saturday: Pistol Cartridge. Sunday: Small Bore (all 80 shots). Medals for top three in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun and juniors. Facilities: Plenty camping room with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, meal provided Friday night. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or laswa2011@gmail.com, clas@iinet.net.au

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Exciting times ahead for Dad and The Boy.

Dad and The Boy just 'eleven' the dream

If you're reading this then welcome to Year Two of 'An Outdoor Life'. Looks like I've made it. Now due to the nature of publishing I'm writing to a future audience and it's my hope that in February 2024 you, as that audience, are more numerous, more vocal and happily spending more time shooting and hunting than last year.

Not because 2023 was a bad year because it wasn't, I just like the idea of more of us doing more. It's better for our sector, our supportive industries and for the future we want as shooters, hunters, collectors, competitors and enthusiasts. And with that in mind I turn to some Big News. Again, as of this month my eldest will have turned 11 and is now a signed-up member of SSAA and of course we have a new rifle to celebrate, but more of that later.

My son and I regard this as a grand adventure and a story worth sharing, so let's begin by introducing the protagonists. You know me, Dad. World renowned gun writer, thought provoking columnist, hunter extraordinaire, social media sensation, Library of Congress-like font of knowledge and ruggedly handsome. Think the Gen X version of Josey Wales.

My partner in all this is The Boy. Having been hunting with Dad since he was six

he's already appeared in *Australian Shooter*, *Australian Hunter* and *Australian Junior Shooter*. He's now 11, tall for his age, an avid reader and developing middle-distance runner, though is showing signs of being a little bit of a kook (the apple doesn't fall far from the tree). One of his points of kookiness is an unwavering commitment to wearing camouflage - in all situations. Ridgeline, Stoney Creek, Huntech, Spika, Hunters Element, he likes them all, so much so that over time his mother and I have had to implement a 'one item of camo' rule when dressing to go out.

An unintended consequence of this rule has been an overzealous commitment to that one item of clothing. In 2022 it was a blaze orange Ridgeline beanie he wore everywhere, including to a school camp. Picking him up on his return I took that smelly, fleecy rag off his sweaty head and threw it in the nearest bin. Last year he graduated to a Beretta Australia blaze orange neck-wrap. In response to a school fundraising bandana day he decided a Franchi shotgun-branded neck-wrap was the way to go and it soon became part of his daily wardrobe. He'd even wear it to bed and I'd have to gently remove it after he fell asleep.

So having established the characters,

what about the journey as every good story has one. For The Boy that story arc will develop over time, while for me I'd like a future where we hunt together and he becomes competent, capable and confident enough to go further. I like the idea of his hunting adventures eventually being greater than mine.

So how do we get there? At this formative stage let's turn to the technical. My rifle of choice is an Uberti Silver boy in .22LR with matching Aimpoint optic. Why, I hear you ask? Well I'm a leftie and he's not, so a lever action is something we can both use while sharing a bench at the range.

It's a compact .22LR that's light enough to shoulder, cheap to run, easy to shoot but is also a little slow to reload when firing single rounds, though personally I don't think that's such a bad thing when starting out. The Uberti is also a pretty rifle, well made and reasonably priced while still knock-about enough to be used by a novice at the range and in the field. Why an Aimpoint? Again, it's easy to set up, easy to use and he can learn about scopes, sight pictures and parallax error when he's a bit older.

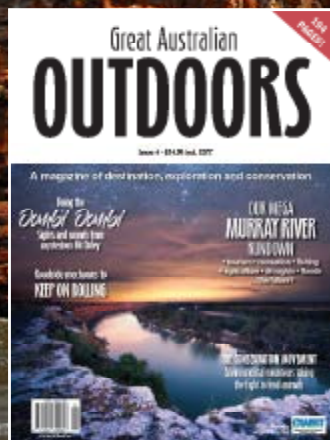
With that settled the big question underlying this whole production is how to introduce a novice to shooting. I honestly don't know how it'll all play out but I do know where to begin. My guiding principle is simple enough: He's not me as he learns and processes information very differently. Sure, he's been hunting with me since he was six and has an extensive Nerf gun collection, yet in real terms is starting from scratch. With that in mind, back in October while the rifle was still secure in the safe we began talking about big things and little things.

Big things like firearm safety, carrying guns in the car, storing ammo, hearing and eye protection and what to do at the range. Little things like is there a shop at the range and does it sell lollies and Fanta? All of it has been about constructively building knowledge and, in doing so, smoothing the path towards practical skills development. Year One will be a test for us both, of which I'll undoubtedly keep you informed. Here's to lead in the air! ●



Great just got greater

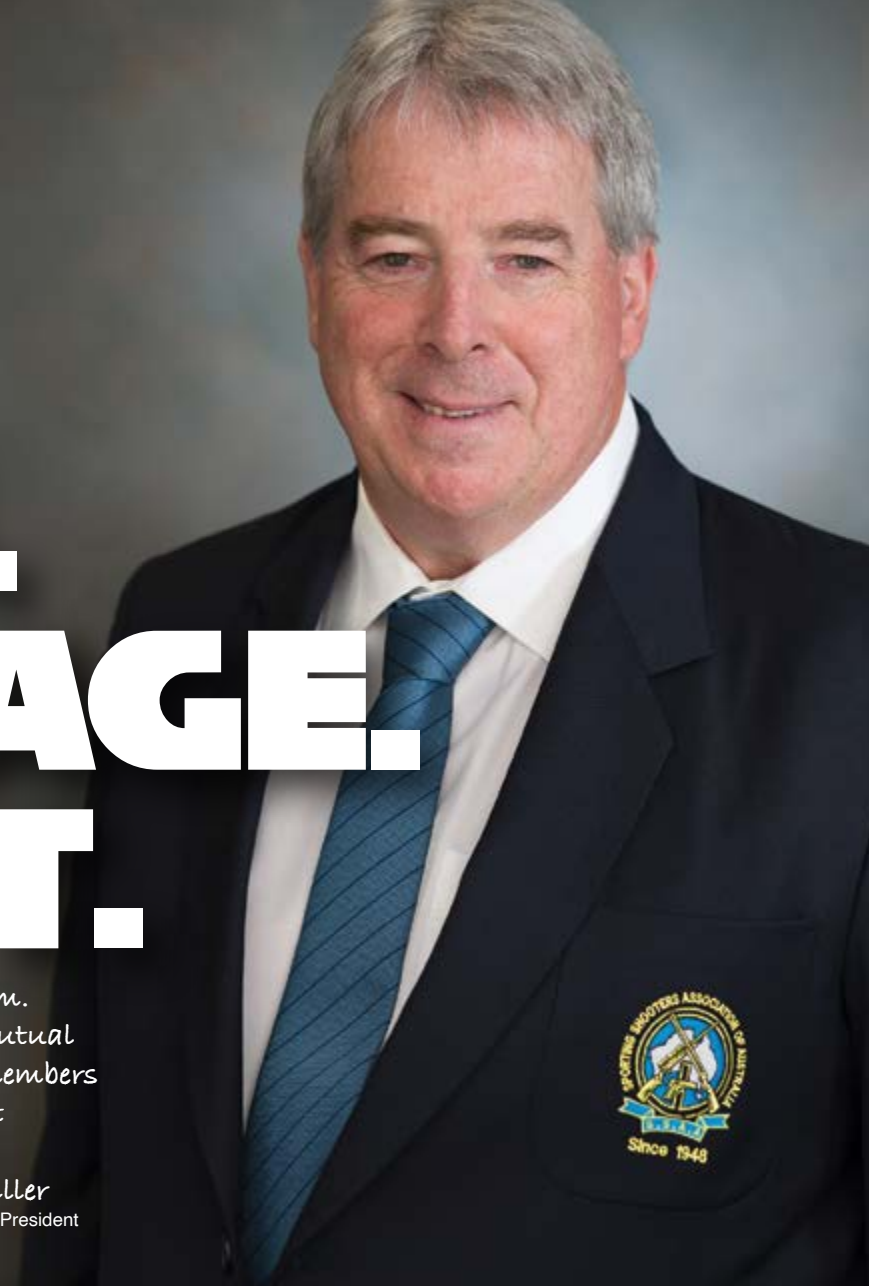
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MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION

HERE'S WHAT SSAA MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION CAN COVER:

Claims Settled Promptly

Firearms & Accessories.

All privately owned firearms registered to the member and fixed accessories.

Coverage.

- Accidental loss and damage of the equipment (including whilst in use, excluding chipping and scratching of stock).
- Malicious damage.
- Collision or overturning of the vehicle.
- Fire & extraneous perils.
- Flood
- Theft.

Not Covered.

Theft where the equipment was not stored in an approved gun safe as required by State or Territory authority, other than when the equipment is in use or away from the member's premises. Where the member or any person or entity to whom the equipment has been entrusted to fails to comply with any law relating to storage, use or handling of the equipment.

Any commentary provided in the advertisement is general information which does not take into account your individual situation and you should consider SSAA Mutual's Financial Services Guide and Statement of Protection (www.ssaib.com.au) before deciding to become a member and to purchase and hold discretionary protection issued by SSAA Mutual Limited. ACN 655 675 862