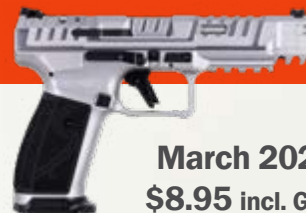


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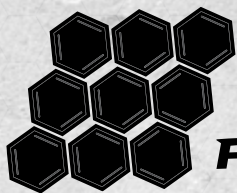
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Tony Ferling of Creekview Red Deer guides hunters in search of stags.



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Political point-scoring comes down to individuals

When the opportunities to enjoy our sport, hobby, recreation and way of life are placed under threat, it's the state and territory SSAA members interacting online, in casual conversations and with our elected state, territory and federal members who make the most telling difference.

We've seen SSAA South Australia and Victorian branches being supported by members to put forward their viewpoint when the future of duck and quail hunting was in question. Both those state governments have conducted formal enquiries into the practice and there was a very real threat the harvesting of these birds for food, by law-abiding shooters, could be banned entirely.

While representatives from these branches have been knocking on doors in parliament and representing our cause, it's the sheer number of members behind them which has driven the point home. The individuals who've been submitting statements to community consultation, writing letters and emails and making phone calls hold a great deal of weight when it comes to exerting pressure on the powers that be.

These actions may seem small but when there are numerous people doing the same thing, the volume of our community has significant influence. In both cases duck and quail seasons are here to stay, thanks in large part to SSAA branches and their members presenting their case.

In Western Australia where a new Firearms Act was being tabled in parliament as *Australian Shooter* went to print, now's the time for the firearm-using community to mobilise. Complementing the work of SSAA (WA) through the WA Firearms Community Alliance (WAFCA) group by using individual voices or the written word is an important leverage tool for our community.

Firearm ownership and regulation is on the radar in Australia's political landscape in 2024, more than it has been in recent years, and ensuring we're proactive as an Association and as individual members to respond appropriately is imperative. The concept of strength is in our numbers and with SSAA membership of all states and territories now stretching beyond 217,000, this is something we can be rightly proud of and use to ensure our voices are collectively heard where it matters.



Successful campaigning rescued the duck-hunting seasons in Victoria and SA.

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Resonating ruminations

I WRITE TO express my thanks to you, your team and especially on this occasion, Mr Mark van den Boogaart for his thoughtful article in *An Outdoor Life* (*Shooter*, August 2023). The reflections he articulated are something which have often been raised among family members and my wider family of shooting colleagues and were thoroughly refreshing to this shooter's mind. His ruminations about death and funerals struck a resonating chord for me, particularly as a minister with the Presbyterian Church and former policeman. Hunting is indeed a genuine reminder of not only our own mortality but the provision of food for our families - which can be joyfully obtained throughout all creation as Mark says - is an absolute privilege (my two sons recently became shooters and have been given the article to read). Please pass on my heartfelt thanks to Mr van den Boogaart and for the work your team do in resisting the efforts of those who'd try to prevent this most basic cultural tradition continuing in its rightful place in our communities.

Rev Allan D. Welch, via email

Pacemaker puzzler

I've recently been fitted with a pacemaker and the surgeon told me I'd have to give up shooting due to the recoil. I tried to explain to him I'd only be using rifles with low recoil but couldn't convince him. After the operation I spoke to a technician who helped calibrate the pacemaker and she couldn't see a problem as long as the rifle butt wasn't resting on the pacemaker itself. I then had to ring the company to register the device and the technician there told me the same thing. I don't intend to start shooting straight away to allow enough time for everything to settle down, so does anyone out there know of anyone shooting with a pacemaker? If so, could they contact me at asjmc2@gmail.com. I shoot L/A with a Browning .222, Marlin R/F .22 and Marlin .357M. I'm right-handed and the device is under my left collar bone.

Allan S. McDonald (SSAA Bowen)

Making an impact

I enjoyed Geoff Smith's review of the Epic-shot X-Class riflescope (*Shooter*, July 2023). What I appreciated most of all was that he tested whether the point of impact changed when the magnification power was changed from the minimum 3x to its maximum of 9x. I've been reading riflescope reviews in *Australian Shooter* and before that in the *Australian Shooters' Journal* since the 1970s but don't ever before remember a scope being tested for this important quality issue. A variable power riflescope is of much diminished value if its point of impact changes significantly as the magnification power changes. It's important to me as I suspected this was happening with at least one of my scopes. It would be helpful if all future riflescope reviews included this test with a quantification of the amount of change, if any.

Brian Finlay, via email

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Q We've reached that point in the year where our insurance providers are sending us updated quotes for the year ahead and I'm shocked to see some increases seemingly out of nowhere. What would you advise us to do to explore our options?

A In general, insurance costs are increasing in Australia at the moment and one of the factors affecting this is the spate of natural

disasters which have occurred across the country in recent times. Fires and floods have tested Australian communities and the effects of these events are ongoing. For example, insurers now have access to new data about how flooding occurs in our landscape and how much of an impact these floods have. This is the first time this information has been updated since the 1950s and 1970s.

Similarly, some of the bushfires have occurred in areas never before affected by

large-scale fire events or in such an intense way and as such, insurers are reassessing risk and the cost of this is flowing through to the public. SSAA General Insurance Brokers can provide personalised advice on insurance solutions and has relationships with an extensive list of underwriters to give you access to competitive products, rates and services. Contact SSAAIB on (08) 8332 0281 or visit ssaaiib.com.au for more information.



Strength in numbers as Victoria hunters show resilience

Gamebird hunters in Victoria were dealt a very bad deal last year on multiple fronts. Firstly it was a heavily restricted season in both bag sizes and season length and then the ridiculous staged review into gamebird hunting. But if the antis were hoping hunters would just give up and not go hunting, they were completely wrong.

Towards the end of last year, the Game Management Authority released their *Estimate of Duck and Stubble Quail Harvest in Victoria for 2023* report which provides some great insight into the steely resolve of Victorian hunters. Each year the GMA commissions a series of regular telephone surveys of randomly selected game license holders for the various species of game animals hunted in Victoria to provide estimates of the total harvest thereof.

Last year the total estimated duck harvest was 319,000 which was very close to the average annual duck harvests in previous surveys (320,000 since 2009) and a 22 per cent increase on 2022. Total estimated number of duck hunting days was 99,700 which was 17 per cent above the average annual duck hunting days in previous surveys (85,000), while the proportion of active duck hunters (65 per cent) was the second-highest recorded since 2017. Game Licence holders endorsed to hunt ducks and who actively did so during the 2023 season, took home an average of 22.7 ducks (18.87) over an average of 7.1 days.

So all I can say is: "Well done Victorian hunters!" In response to your season being reduced from 12 weeks to five, you decided to venture out more often than you would in a normal season and, as a result of your efforts, the harvest was even more



bountiful. This is certainly a hefty backhander to those people who tried their best to ruin your hunting season and supposedly 'save the ducks'.

The three most commonly harvested species were Pacific Black Duck (which comprised 45 per cent of the total harvest), Grey Teal (29) and Australian Wood Duck (18). The remaining ducks harvested were Chestnut Teal (4), Mountain Duck (1) and Pink-eared Duck (2), while hunting of Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead was prohibited during the 2023 season.

This breakdown of species taken illustrates yet again why there's no need to mess around with silly restrictions on take at individual species level, as ducks continue to dictate the contents of a hunter's bag solely on their levels of abundance. The most bountiful birds flying past will always find their way into a hunter's bag as the majority species and with Black Duck and Grey Teal being two of the most abundant ducks in south-east Australia, they'll always be taken in good numbers while other species will continue to be a limited add-on.

It was a similar story regarding hunters' enthusiasm to go quail hunting. The total

estimated Stubble Quail harvest in 2023 was 302,800 which was double the average annual harvest of that species from previous surveys (149,000). Total estimated number of Stubble Quail hunting days was 27,000 which was 39 per cent more than the annual average from previous surveys (19,000). Game Licence holders endorsed to hunt Stubble Quail who actively did so during the 2023 season, harvested an average of 63.6 quail over an average 5.7 days.

The total number of hunter days during the 2023 season for ducks and Stubble Quail was estimated to be 126,700, a massive effort by Victorian hunters to get into the swamps and paddocks and ensure gamebird hunting is well and truly alive in the face of political uncertainty. Hopefully this sends a strong message that hunting is a popular pastime which many people enjoy spending their hard-earned and limited recreational time participating in.

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P.O. Ackley: A pioneer with an enduring legacy

Born on May 25, 1903 in Granville, New York, Parker Otto Ackley or P.O. Ackley as he was more commonly known was a renowned American gunsmith, barrel-maker and cartridge designer who made significant contributions to the fields of firearms and ballistics. His impact on the world of rifles and ammunition is still felt today, particularly through his innovative work on improving existing cartridges and developing new ones.

He was an avid experimenter who took nothing for granted and would often test rifles, their actions and cartridges to destruction, just to see for himself how strong or otherwise they were. He kept painstaking records of these experiments and often referred to them in the many articles he wrote while on the staff of *Shooting Times* and *Guns & Ammo* magazines.

Ackley gained prominence for his expertise in creating high-performance cartridges by modifying existing designs. One of his most notable contributions was the development of the Ackley Improved cartridges, which he did by changing the shoulder angle and improving the case capacity of popular cartridges to enhance their overall performance.

One of the iconic cartridges to receive this treatment was the highly popular .30-06 Springfield. His version, known as the .30-06 Ackley Improved, featured a steeper shoulder angle and blown-out case body, providing shooters with increased velocity and reduced recoil. This modification extended the life of the brass which

made it an attractive choice for reloaders.

But his influence wasn't limited to a single calibre as he applied his improvements to other popular cartridges including the .243 Winchester, .257 Roberts, .280 Remington and more. The Ackley Improved versions of these became popular choices for precision shooters and hunters seeking enhanced performance. In all he produced 62 Ackley Improved cartridges, among them in 1944 being the first .17 ever made, which he called the .17 Ackley Bee. It wasn't until much later in 1971 when Remington introduced its .17 Remington that another .17 cartridge appeared on the market.

As well as designing improved cartridges, Ackley was also an accomplished author. His writings included *Handbook for Shooters and Reloaders* and in 1962 he published *Handbook for Reloaders Volume 1* followed four years later by *Volume 2* and all have become valuable resources for gun enthusiasts and reloaders. In these publications Ackley shared his vast knowledge of ballistics, reloading techniques and cartridge design, providing a wealth of information for generations of shooters.

In addition to his work on cartridge design he was a skilled gunsmith and barrel-maker and his custom rifles, often built on Mauser and Springfield actions, were highly sought after for their precision and craftsmanship qualities. P.O. Ackley's legacy continues to thrive, with many gunsmiths and shooters still recognising the merits of his contributions, while Ackley Improved cartridges remain popular



choices among those who appreciate the balance between ballistic performance and practical functionality. The principles he established in cartridge design and rifle craftsmanship continue to influence the field and his name is synonymous with innovation in the world of firearms.

Ackley's impact on rifle cartridges is profound and enduring. His ingenuity in improving existing designs and creating the Ackley Improved versions has left an indelible mark on the wider shooting community. Ackley's legacy as a gunsmith, barrel-maker and cartridge designer continues to shape the way enthusiasts approach firearms, ensuring his contributions will be remembered for generations to come.



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Q I've heard that filling the back of my shotgun stock with lead will make me shoot faster. Is that fact or fiction?

Bruce Abberton, Qld.

A My first question is just how much lead you're talking about? I've certainly added small quantities of lead weights to people's shotguns over the years to balance 'barrel-heavy' firearms. If you place the closed shotgun on your hand around the mid-point of the gun straight below the hinge pin, it shouldn't fall forward or back. If it falls forward then placing lead inside the stock until it's balanced is a good solution.

If you keep adding large quantities of lead, the stock will very quickly become 'back heavy' and in theory the barrels will feel lighter to move when you point at a target. What I've found from experience is adding large amounts of weight to the stock will make many competitors lose control of their barrels and won't improve accuracy. You need to be very careful here as a balanced shotgun is a huge asset. A stock-heavy shotgun may feel better in theory but in practice won't help your scores improve, especially under pressure.

Reputable firearm companies spend an awful lot of time ensuring their competitive shotguns are perfectly balanced before being released to the consumer. After-market additions are fraught with danger, though added lead weight will have two advantages. First of all it'll reduce recoil of the shotgun and secondly should pump up your biceps if you practice mounting it regularly at home.

Q My wife bought me a set of shooting glasses with yellow lenses so I can shoot competitions at night. I've now heard this may not be such a good idea and am keen to hear your thoughts.

Chris Mifsud, Vic.

A Sadly, Chris, it appears your wife no longer likes you, as she clearly doesn't want to see you succeed in your night clay target shooting career. Yellow won't help so buy a set of clear lenses and 're-gift' those yellow ones to someone you don't like next Christmas. Sorry to hear your marriage is over! Chin up - there are plenty more fish in the sea.

Q If you had just one 12-gauge shotshell to break a clay target at 40m and your life depended on it busting, what would you use?

Pete Gordon, Vic.

A Using 36 grams of No.6 lead shot made with five per cent antimony travelling at a velocity of 390 metres per second should do quite nicely. You did say just one shot, as I wouldn't want to use that load for too long!

Q I'm wondering if there's any particular type of footwear you'd recommend when shooting clays? I have been online researching this and can't find a definitive answer. Any help appreciated.

Kel Northington, WA

A The vast majority of participants in clay target shooting compete using stock-standard low cut sandshoes or 'runners', though in saying that I've seen at least two Australian Olympians compete quite successfully in everyday work boots. In essence, as long as your footwear's comfortable I'm of the opinion it really doesn't matter too much.

I always preferred flat-bottom soles so I could put as much surface area on the shooting pad as possible, but as long as the shoe didn't slip then I never found any type of footwear remarkably better than another. Very few companies in the firearms industry have tried too hard to market shooting shoes, which I guess is testament to the fact that apart from branding, there's not much technological advantage pushing a shoe that was supposedly going to make you aim straighter.

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Q I'm 53 and have recently taken up clay target shooting. It's not something I grew up with or have family involved in but I'm very much enjoying getting used to the shotgun and building confidence with it. As a newbie to the shooter/hunter world, what are my best options or ways to connect with groups or people to eventually go hunting? I attend a clay target group in the Gippsland area and want to eventually hunt rabbits, deer, etc but have no idea what to do or how to go about it. I'd appreciate any tips or advice you can give to someone new to hunting who's keen to take it up.

Craig Bradley, via email

A I often say to our local clay target club committee members that the perfect recruit to our sport is someone in their fifties who often has family expenses under

control and can devote some cash and enthusiasm to getting into shooting and you sound like the perfect example. Great to hear you've started with shotgun and clay shooting. Trap and Skeet are a good starting point and, for many people, are as far as they go. Sporting Clays is the best discipline for teaching all-round shotgunning skills, especially as you want to take up hunting and there are plenty of Sporting Clays clubs in Victoria.

The SSAA has many clubs which shoot 5-Stand, a compact version of Sporting Clays that's lots of fun. You'll also find many members in the Gippsland area are also interested in hunting and if they like you, are happy with the way you present yourself and are confident you're a safe shot, then over time you'll be invited to private properties. Of course, they'll have to be

sure they trust you to respect the access provided and the rules which landowners reasonably impose.

There are amazing hunting opportunities in the Victorian High Country, especially for sambar deer, though getting into that scene will involve a lot of research and investment in a suitable rifle, scope and ammunition as well as appropriate clothing for what can be extreme weather variations. You'll have to ask around about local deer-hunting clubs and visit one or two to see how you get along with the locals and serve your 'apprenticeship'. Word of mouth or Facebook and Google can be helpful here. You have a long road ahead and I wish you the best of luck as it'll be worth the effort so don't rush, just enjoy the journey.

Paul Miller



Rabbit hunting can be done at night . . . but not when there are horses around.



Q Leon Wright's article 'Respect the Rimfire' (*Shooter*, December 2023) mentioned a Winchester Cooley with tubular magazine. To my recollection that's the first time this make of rifle has been mentioned in the magazine since I became a SSAA member 25 years ago. I bought a single-shot rimfire Cooley .22 (photo attached) from a Subiaco gun shop in Western Australia in 1972 for \$5 and, unusually, the rifle had no serial number. I'd really appreciate any information or history you can unearth.

Brian Pickup, via email

A Your Cooley single-shot is a Model 39 and was designed by Herbert Cooley of the H.W. Cooley Machine and Arms Company in Canada around 1938/39. Cooley firearms were first made in 1919 and went out of production in 1979 and at that time the Cooley name was owned by Winchester who'd bought the company in 1961. Early rifles had walnut stocks but those produced by Winchester after 1961 had stocks of stained hardwood. Rifles made between 1961 and 1968 apparently weren't stamped with serial numbers.

The M39 is widely regarded as one of the safest youth training rifles ever made because of its simple construction and is now highly collectable, especially in Canada. Cooley is credited with designing no less than 67 different rifles and also produced a range of single-barrel shotguns which still turn up occasionally. A booklet entitled *Cooley Firearms made in Canada 1919-1979* by John A. Belton is available on the internet if you're looking for more detailed information on the marque. Hope this helps.

John Dunn

Q I have failing eyes and while corrective glasses have helped a bit, I was hoping to switch to a red dot sight. I used an Allchin mount on a Smith & Wesson revolver which replaces the standard rear sight and has an RMR footprint integrated so no need of a Picatinny rail (I mount it about as low as I think it can go). Best thing ever - red dot, corrective glasses and good club people offering advice have all helped.

Curve ball is I was thinking about a Chiappa Rhino in 9mm but with a 5" barrel not the 6". The latter has an integrated Picatinny rail where some people have mounted their red dot, but that means it's well forward (the 6" is the only Rhino with a rail). Trying to find a mount for a red dot above the cylinder or sitting in place of the

rear sight doesn't seem possible yet. I did find one chap overseas who 3D-printed a Picatinny rail which replaces the rear sight, though I'm unsure if it's plastic and indeed tough enough.

So I was wondering if you've come across this at all. As it turns out there aren't many Chiappa Rhinos of any kind sitting on the shelves in Australia anyway, so it may never happen.

Peter Robins, via email

A I've seen a few of these in use locally, mostly in .357 but also one in 9mm. They're unusual yet have a very solid following among handgun enthusiasts around the world. The barrel being located at the bottom rather than the top of the hexagonal

cylinder improves the recoil characteristics and overall they're unique. Because only the 6" model comes with an inbuilt Picatinny rail, mounting a red dot sight would require a specially designed adaptor.

Because there are holes through the top section of the barrel, I believe a block of aluminium could be milled with a slot and clamped over the top with perhaps two through-bolts and a short section of Picatinny rail attached to this. The alternative of course would be to go to the longer 6" barrel and use this. I did some searching but couldn't find anyone offering a commercial adaptor so maybe some of our readers have other suggestions. Anyway, good luck on your mission.

Geoff Smith



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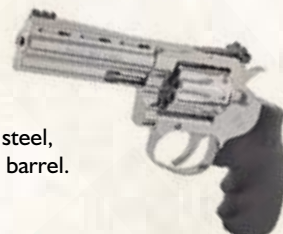
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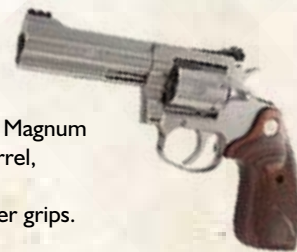
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A Zbroia air rifle with a scope is leaning against a tree in a snowy landscape. The rifle is dark brown with a black scope and a blue reticle. The background shows a snowy ground and bare trees under a blue sky.

Wait for it...

Nathan Besh had his patience tested when buying air rifles from Ukraine

If you want to help improve a country, one of the best things you can do is directly bolster its economy by buying locally produced goods or providing micro-loans and finance direct to local businesses. This is one of the best ways to ensure long-term prosperity and it's how I started my journey importing three Zbroia air rifles from Ukraine. After several discussions with their export team I

decided to go ahead. That was February 23, 2022 and the very next day Vladimir Putin changed things forever.

A bit of history

The story of the Zbroia Company begins in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the city of Kharkiv when a team of enthusiasts came together to import goods for outdoor activities and hunting. During the next 10 years

the business constantly expanded and in 2011 development and production of Zbroia rifles commenced.

Kharkiv is the second-largest city in Ukraine, home to some of the most prestigious education facilities with more than 20 research institutions as well as significant manufacturing facilities from machine-building and electro-technology through to instrument-making, all of which generate

an incredible pool of talent. Zbroia fitted out its workshops with top-quality CNC machines from Germany and Japan and built its own in-house woodworking, metal-working and electroplating facilities.

The first domestic PCP rifle made was the Kozak (named after the ancient warriors and defenders of Ukraine), a compact bullpup design allowing for a large air cylinder and long barrel. This facilitates a significant number of high-powered shots in a compact package with excellent balance, perfect for hunting. The second design was a classic in the Hortitsia (the island where the Kozaks lived) with traditional Monte Carlo stock.

Zbroia then started working with the National Biathlon Federation of Ukraine and collaborated with athletes on their Olympic team, the result being the first domestically-made PCP for biathlons. This provided a low-cost solution for training, giving high reliability in the harshest of conditions with a rifle which fully complies with all international biathlon requirements.

In 2016 the Zbroia Company launched its export business with products now sold in more than 20 countries in Europe, North and South America, South Africa, the Persian Gulf, south-east Asia and New Zealand, while their Biathlon model is used for training athletes in Greenland, Sweden, USA, Latvia, Hungary and Slovakia. Throughout 2022 and 2023 the Zbroia team continued to work in the face of regular shelling and bombardment from Russian forces, with priceless support from other countries as well as everyday customers. The staff know their work is important, with products expected and appreciated the world over.

Import process

This is a long and arduous affair but if you want something unique it can be done. While the initial cost of a firearm from overseas may seem inexpensive, it's not uncommon for those costs to double or triple once it reaches you - and expect at least six months from order to taking possession. The first step is to check if the firearms comply with local requirements. Depending on classification there may be size restrictions and/or features which are forbidden and it's up to the importer to verify and accept the risks if they don't make it through Customs.

The next step is paperwork, as the seller may require approvals to verify you can receive the firearm in this country. This may be an international import certificate from the Australian Department of Defence or your home state's import form

(for example a NSW B709). This will vary depending on the country you're buying from.

At this stage your firearms are ready for shipping and need to be paid for - another challenge. If you mention the word 'firearms' to a foreign currency exchange service expect plenty of questions and refusals, due to most insurance companies having a blanket 'no arms dealing' type of policy regardless of approvals from the Australian Department of Defence, it's simply a 'no firearms' policy. When you find a currency exchange that's willing, you can then expect average conversion rates and more paperwork.

Once paid they'll then have to be sent via special shipping services familiar with firearms and the required approvals and paperwork. Speak to any shipping company and you'll find costs have risen astronomically since the end of 2019 (what used to be less than \$1/kg is now more than \$10/kg). When they land in Australia there'll be additional fees for clearing and processing. GST is also added which will be on the price of the goods and expensive shipping. At this point the cost will be about 70-80 per cent of the final end price and at least twice the initial purchase fee.

Then the firearms will arrive in Australia and you may take a few calls from people you've never spoken to before, especially when importing firearms from a country which has just suffered a major invasion. Once here they'll 'vanish' into quite a few black holes and there's very little tracking or updates as they progress through these final steps.

The guns will undergo compliance and safety testing to confirm they meet all Australian firearms regulations and will then be released to your dealer who'll register them in your state. If you're handling something which has never been imported before expect delays, as they have to classify it and there's nothing to go on as the brand and/or model may not be in their system, so a lot of extra work will be required.

After registration they can then be released so ensure you add a few weeks' delay in each step of the process once landed. Tracking and updates may also be hard to find depending on where in the process they are, especially as prior to being registered in your name, technically they're not 'yours' so it may be up to the dealer to assist with any enquiries.

It's a long and tiresome process; however, it's absolutely possible to succeed if you have patience and set your expectations correctly. I had some invaluable

An IIC is not a permission to import; rather, it is a certification to a foreign government that the controlled goods will be subject to Australian export control laws once the items have been imported into Australia.



Perfect balance for field target or hunting, the full-length barrel and air cylinder ensures plenty of high power shots in a compact package.

support from Magnum Sports of NSW, though there are other Australian companies who specialise in importing firearms and can look after the whole process for you. Given my experience, the advertised costs of these services seem very reasonable.

The rifles

I imported the Hortitsia, Biathlon and Kozak, all very different in application yet

Wait for it . . .



Zbroia rifles are built to deliver performance in all conditions.

versatile and with some crossover between them. Zbroia offer all their rifles in .177 and .22 calibre with power from 7.5 to 44 joules with the Sapsan model also available in .30 calibre and up to 100 joules of power.

I ordered my three rifles in .22 calibre and .27 joules which would make an 18gr pellet travel at about 850fps, the sweet spot for ammunition selection and performance. Like most PCPs this power level can be adjusted through hammer spring tension, replacing the hammer spring or adjusting the internal pressure regulator (not frequently done). This power level gives me access to a wide variety of pellets from different brands and weights to ensure I achieve that perfect 850fps speed, the fastest you should typically run a diabolo-shaped pellet and maintain accuracy.

There is some parts commonality between the different models which helps manufacturing efficiency and keeps costs down, all three having internally regulated 300 bar air cylinders which are tested to 495 bar. The Hortitsia and Biathlon also share the same Fortner-style reloading system and magazines. More than 90 per cent of parts are manufactured in-house including trigger components and barrels,

both made from weapon-grade steel with barrels having a 450mm (1/17") twist. Stocks are made of ash and walnut from environmentally friendly sources and treated with Italian lacquer. Zbroia rifles can be ordered in numerous combinations of calibre, power levels, stock colour, barrel length and air tank capacity.

Hortitsia

A classic and versatile sporting rifle well suited to either target shooting or pest control. The Monte Carlo stock allows for fast target acquisition and a great cheek weld with low or medium scope rings depending on your glass. I took the rifle out the box, verified the power setting was correct using JSB Exact Jumbo heavy 18.13gr pellets to achieve consistent 850fps over the chronograph, then mounted a Hawke Endurance 6-24 x 50 scope and bore-sighted it in.

I headed to Peninsular Firearm Academy at Terrey Hills and set up at 50m on a bench with a front bag for the rest and used their electronic targets. It took a few shots to get on target but once I did it was incredible (using electronic targets can be tricky as there's nothing to actually aim at except a

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MAGAZINE	Removable polymer single stack



CALIBRES: 204Rgr 223Rem 243Win 6.5cm 308Win

LA102 VARMINT

A heavier varmint rifle crossing modern tech with traditional aesthetics

WEIGHT	4.0 - 4.1kg
LENGTH	1077mm (barrel 24")
CAPACITY	10 Rounds

TRIGGER	Single stage adjustable 2-4lbs
BARREL	Heavy hammer forged chromemoly
MAGAZINE	Removable metal box magazine



CALIBRES: 223Rem 243Win 6.5cm 308Win

LA102 OUTBACK

A mid weight/ compact scout & tactical truck rifle on a SCSA TSP-X chassis

WEIGHT	4.1 - 4.2kg
LENGTH	966mm (barrel 18")
CAPACITY	10 Rounds

TRIGGER	Single stage adjustable 2-4lbs
BARREL	Hammer forged chromemoly
MAGAZINE	Removable metal box magazine



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Wait for it . . .

large black circle 15cm in diameter). The trigger was beautifully crisp and smooth and the hammer felt quite soft compared to other PCPs I've shot.

I was shooting consistent 10s non-stop and with the Fortner action, each follow-up shot was lightning fast. It was way easier and smoother than other straight-pull rifles I've used, as the reload can be done with a single finger pull-back and push forward with the thumb, all while maintaining constant sight of the target and not having to take either hand off the stock. The accuracy was astounding and you'd certainly be competitive in smallbore with this rifle.

Biathlon

This model is based on the same platform as the Hortitsia, Fortner-style reload and magazines with the same barrel and slightly smaller capacity air tank. The difference is in the stock and sights. The former features multiple mounting points for straps as well as an adjustable cheek piece and butt plate, facilitating perfect adjustment for the shooter. While it does have a rail for mounting a scope, I went for the traditional Biathlon peep sights.



Exquisite craftsmanship and attention to detail make the Biathlon a head-turner at the range.

Being a true Biathlon rifle it can handle the snow, as magazines have been revised with dual locking balls and are magnetically held in the stock, ensuring there's no premature wear on rubber or silicone seals in harsh conditions. Shooting this one gave the same results as the Hortitsia, supreme accuracy and fast follow-up shots. As it complies with international standards, this would be a superb and affordable training rifle for any biathlon competitor.

Kozak FC

The Kozak Fully Compact is Zbroia's bullpup offering, allowing a full-sized

550mm barrel and 290cc cylinder in a compact 810mm overall length, providing a beautifully balanced package that's easy to carry in the field. The reloading mechanism is next to the magazine and not the trigger so reloads require you to take your hand away from the trigger, slower yet not unlike other bullpups.

The Picatinny rail is also quite close to the barrel so if using 40 or 50mm glass you'll need at least medium-height rings in order to achieve a good cheek-weld. This would be the perfect varmint rifle being compact, beautifully weighted with solid power and shot count. ●

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Welcome back

James Crossan shares what he's learned three years after rediscovering shooting



Bore guides are a cheap and easy way to safely clean your rifle.

I did some shooting as a teenager but only decided to take it up again as my 45th birthday approached. I was enticed back by an obsession with the Ruger M96 lever action and finally thought, why not just buy one? Three years on I've made some mistakes, confirmed some 'glad I did that' choices but mostly felt I'd done well enough first time round then tried to do it better. So here's what I've learned.

Don't skimp on cleaning gear

There's a powerful temptation to buy your first gun asap then go shooting - now! But first budget \$500 to buy some quality core tools and cleaning gear. I bought one of those cheap multipart screw-together cleaning rod kits because I'd so many other more important items I just had to have (I used it once then binned it). Now I use a one-piece carbon fibre rod which is great. Make sure to store cleaning rods hanging upright off a hook so they don't develop a permanent bend.

Bore snakes are a handy piece of gear - essential if you can't use a rod to clean from

the chamber end as with lever actions - and again, don't skimp. My budget kit came with a bore snake and the first time I used it the tip snapped off two inches inside the barrel. Try to find bore snakes with a threaded coupler on the tip for all your standard cleaning attachments, as a rope-only pull-through is really only field expedient because it retains all the gunk from the barrel then drags that fouling back through on each subsequent pass.

Clean properly

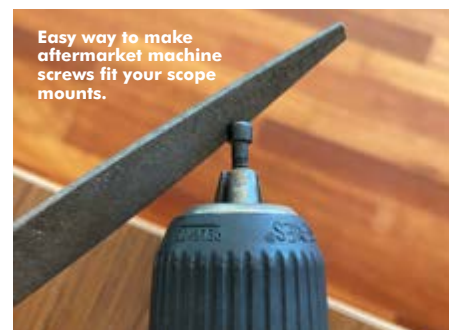
Cleaning is my least favourite part of the sport (just ahead of those who set up either side of me with muzzle-braked magnum rifles while I'm shooting 22LR). Yet all machines require maintenance and the longer you put it off the harder it becomes.

Advice on cleaning is a bottomless pit of contradiction and received wisdom and the best answer is probably: 'It depends.' But one hot tip I've taken on is to stick a solvent-soaked bore mop into the chamber when I pack up at the range, then when I'm home 30 minutes later I give the chamber

a quick scrub and patch out with a bent chamber brush. So far I haven't yet seen a carbon ring form.

Recap bottles immediately

This is a good multi-situation recommendation. Unless you keep your chemicals all together in one caddy, then once you wet the rag, anoint the patch, dip the brush or drip the oil, you should put the lid straight back on the bottle. Then there's no risk of a mini Exxon Valdez-like spill all over your workbench and trousers.





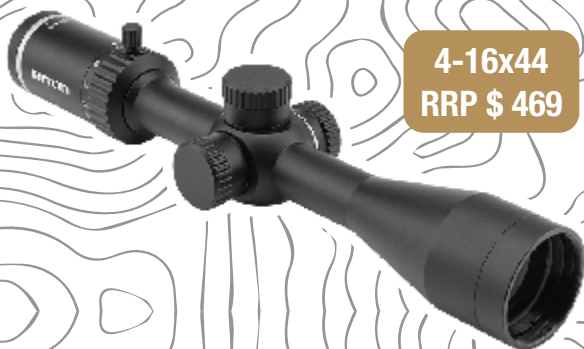
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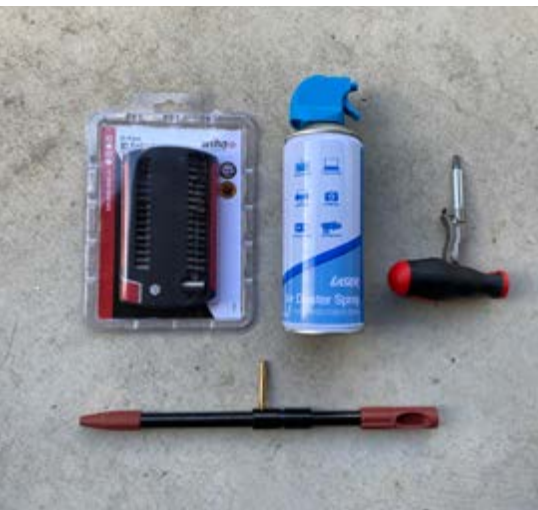
Handy tools

Along with a good cleaning rod a quality adjustable torque driver should be one of your first purchases, though it's not optional. I also bought a 1/4" hex bit driver with 90-degree folding shank which I can use like a screwdriver or T-handle for extra force. The driver bits supplied with some tools often aren't the best as they may be improperly hardened, have poor surface coatings or be cut out of spec, yet I've never failed with German-made bits like Wiha and some I've used thousands of times without any dramas.

I love some air in a can too. When I first bore-scoped my 22 the amount of fluff inside the barrel surprised me. Bores have been damaged because debris or patch thread, caught up on the rifling, was then crushed into the barrel by a passing bullet. I give my rifles a quick air blast before I leave for the range to ensure the barrel and action are completely free of foreign material and also use rubber thimbles snapped over the muzzle.



Rubber thimbles make handy muzzle caps.



Some useful 'second tier' items.



Confirm everything

As a former tradesman I should know better (measure twice, cut once) so think through what you're about to do before you do it. Keep everything in well-separated locations while you work. Was this Allen key for the scope bases or rings? Did these screws belong with the MDT rail or Nightforce rings? Was that torque setting for the action or the butt-plate? Check screw heads and ensure you match them to the correct tool or bit, using a magnifier if necessary.

And on the subject of screws, sooner or later you'll round one out. Some companies offer free replacements but otherwise you can usually find a suitable match online cheaper than the brand-name item. On eBay I found eight compatible screws for \$9 and all I had to do was put them in a drill chuck then, on high speed, use a file to slightly re-profile the screw head to fit the ring recesses.

Gunsmiths

As in any walk of life some gunsmiths are better than others and I've had exceptional work done, encountered some mistakes due to poor housekeeping and, unfortunately, dealt with one who was little more than a blacksmith. My advice is to be explicit about what you want and print your requests and all relevant information on a label tied to the gun. When you pick it up, check your firearm before you leave and speak up straight away if there's a problem. You also need patience as sadly, long delays are the norm now and as SSAA membership keeps rising, the number of gunsmiths seems to be on the decline.

Shooting ranges

Turn up early. Don't be the one who delays the range opening because you still have to

place your targets - pack up all your gear the night before so you're not rushing the next day. Take ear plugs and ear muffs, eye protection and a bottle of water. You'd be surprised how dehydrated you can become sitting under a tin roof for three hours with all your focus squeezed into a small dark cylinder. Finally, stay off your phone and give all safety rules your full attention.

Then and now

I'm so glad I came back to shooting as I love the self-apprenticing research and experimentation of it, the way it scratches my gear-head itch and the constant learning which translates into demonstrable improvement, shrinking groups and printed proof of bullseyes. I made a commitment to not even think about hunting until I could shoot safely and accurately, knew how my guns performed both hot and cold, with which ammo and at what distances.

My only real regret so far is buying a 'cool' rifle over a reliable, accurate performer. But other than avoiding that sort of trap, I'd offer the same advice in the shooting sports as for anyone entering a new hobby: keep learning and don't take shortcuts. Ask for assistance whenever you can as most other shooters are more than happy to help you out. Smaller gun shops are great wellsprings of wisdom too, as the staff aren't run off their feet.

Then once you've attended the range regularly for a year or two, consider inviting friends and family if you know they're safe to shoot a firearm and you feel confident with that responsibility. I've found this to be a generous sport, so be a good citizen and pass on the love. ●



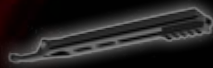
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Mono Pod

- 700mm C2 barrel
- 20MOA Picatinny Rail
- Match Trigger
- Adjustable regulator
- Adjustable hammer tension
- Cocking changeable from left to right
- Safety changeable from left to right
- 580cc carbon fibre air tank
- 1/2" UNF barrel thread
- Adjustable cheek rest
- Adjustable butt pad
- AR grip platform



24 Month
Warranty KATRA B



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KATRA B

Carbon Fibre Bottle

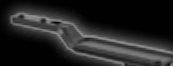
COMPATIBLE ACCESSORIES



Keymod to Picatinny
Rail Adaptor



Keymod to ARCA
Rail Adaptor



ARCA / Picatinny
Extension Rail

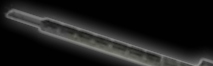
- C2 barrel
- 20MOA Picatinny Rail
- Match Trigger
- Adjustable regulator
- Adjustable hammer tension
- Cocking changeable from left to right
- Safety changeable from left to right
- M18x1 barrel thread
- Dual magazine holder at rear of stock
- Metal cased magazine
- Adjustable cheek rest
- Adjustable butt pad (Fixed for NSW)
- Folding stock (Fixed for NSW)
- AR grip platform



24 Month
Warranty



COMPATIBLE ACCESSORIES



ARCA / Picatinny
Extension Rail



Plenum
Extension

- RTI Proprietary Barrel
- Adjustable regulator
- Micro adjustable hammer tension
- Pressure-assisted valve system (ensures rapid closure times)
- Adjustable Picatinny rail 20 to 150 MOA
- Adjustable ambidextrous cheek piece
- Interchangeable calibre
- Ambidextrous magazine
- 1/2" UNF barrel thread
- AR grip platform



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A person is standing in a dry, bushy outdoor environment. They are wearing camouflage-patterned pants and olive green gaiters. The gaiters have the brand name 'SPIKA' printed vertically in orange on the outer side of each leg. The person is also wearing dark hiking boots. The background consists of dry grass, twigs, and green shrubs under a clear blue sky.

BUSH-SAVVY GEAR

Ben Unten road-tests the latest clothing, gaiters and game bags from Spika

Snug-fitting gaiters.

Spika is an Australian owned and operated company based in Victoria and *Australian Shooter* was grateful for the opportunity to review some of their latest product offerings including Xone pants, a Gridfleece top, game bags and snake-resistant gaiters.

Xone pants

This technical item of clothing is designed as a top layer and is mid-weight yet comfortable enough to wear as a light-weight garment. It's definitely burr-resistant and has a number of clever features such as a versatile break-up camo pattern, built-in adjustable belt over a press stud closer, a shoelace clip to stop the legs from riding up (so they double as a sock-saver of sorts) and an adjustable ankle cuff which lets you tighten or loosen it to form a snug fit around your boots.

I was impressed by the front/side pockets which include two standard, open pockets (like you'd find on your favourite pair of jeans) along with a lower pair sealed with a zipper and there's also a rear zipper-sealed pocket. The pants are extremely comfortable to wear thanks to a stretchy material and two zippered side ventilation strips about 300mm long, running from mid-thigh to below the knee. Unzipping these exposes the inner mesh and allows for easier cooling via improved exposure to breeze.

They're wind-resistant but still breathable and DWR-treated (durable water repellent). The oversized belt loops are a big plus for hunters who like to wear hobble-type belts (as I do) and I wore these pants during a daytime hunt where the burr-resistance and comfort were put to the test and passed with flying colours. I then zipped them up for a spotlighting session that night and was equally comfortable. RRP \$159.95.

Gridfleece zip top

Designed as a base or mid-layer, the qualities of this top allowed me to wear it as a standalone garment during an early spring hunt. It has a unique Gridfleece construction which appears on the inside surface as a series of roughly 5x5mm squares, designed to distribute body heat more evenly. Some clever features include thumbholes, a large chest pocket and three-quarter length YKK zipper which is deep enough to allow you to lose heat rapidly

when required, yet runs right up under your chin to provide extra warmth for your neck in cooler weather.

I wore it as a standalone top for hunting during the day with temps in the low 20s when my hunting partner and I stalked in on a feral pig. Thanks to the break-up camo pattern we moved to within 115m and I felt comfortable behind the stock as the trigger was squeezed and the pig dropped on the spot. We went back to the ute before taking photos and I took the opportunity to put on a thermal t-shirt under the Gridfleece before we returned to the pig for photos and to start a spotlighting session.

The evening temperature drop was no problem thanks to the Gridfleece design and I was lucky enough to come across a young fallow doe (currently legal to take under lights in New South Wales). After ranging her at 228m I squeezed the trigger and some prime cuts of tender venison were soon ageing nicely in the fridge. I found the Gridfleece top very comfortable and practical to wear for both daytime and night duties and couldn't fault it. RRP \$129.95.

Strike gaiters

At time of writing (early spring) the 'Joe Blakes' are out early and, off the back of a mouse plague in much of regional NSW, their numbers are reportedly much higher than in recent years. The only thing better than a snakebite kit in your backpack - which everyone should carry and know how to use - is to avoid being bitten in the first place. These Strike gaiters are snakebite resistant, though Spika also offer the Ranger gaiters which are not bite-resistant.

Made from heavy duty polyurethane bonded canvas, Strike gaiters cover the entire lower leg and have two methods of attachment which run under your boot just in front of the heel, with the upper section secured to stop them riding up and leaving any flesh exposed. The first is a bootlace clip (secured with two rivets) and there's also an adjustable wire-strap which runs under your boot, while the upper section is fastened by an adjustable buckle.

The Strike is able to be fully opened out so you don't need to take your boots off to put them on or remove them. They're secured via an inner YKK zipper and extra-strong exterior Velcro with a press stud at



Full ensemble in a highly effective break-up pattern.

Bush-savvy gear

the base, ensuring double protection against the gaiter inadvertently opening to leave your leg exposed.

They're DWR-treated to help repel water and while I couldn't find any volunteers to let a snake bite them, an online search threw up footage of snakes unable to pop an inflated balloon inside a Strike gaiter along with a crazy snake expert letting a number of venomous serpents, including a tiger snake, bite the Strike gaiters while he was wearing them (please don't try this at home!) Gaiters aren't the most comfortable item of clothing ever invented but these fit well and are way more preferable to dealing with snakebites in the bush. RRP \$149.95.

Game bags

If you harvest meat from the field you need game bags so forget those perfumed garbage sacks which taint the flavour, rip easily and can cause the meat to sweat. Drover meat bags are available in a three-pack set featuring two large and one small and having multiple sizes in one pack is clever, as it removes the guesswork yet still caters to a huge variety of game animals.

The small bag has a 44L capacity at 440mm x 720mm while the large one has a 113L capacity at 600mm x 995mm. They're bright orange in colour with reflective tabs,



Clever pre-packaged bag sizes.

both excellent features which give the bags the potential for multi-purpose use as they're easy to spot at night and can be used as a signaling aid.

Another clever feature is their ability to fold down into an internal pocket which takes minimal room in your pack and makes them easy to store. Made from synthetic fabric they're drawstring closable, breathable and machine washable. I hung meat by the drawstrings overnight to stop it from becoming an easy meal for any passing

vermin then packed it into an esky for the trip home.

I appreciated having a range of bags when dressing a fallow doe as one hindquarter accidentally made contact with the ground, so I was able to put it in its own bag to minimise cross-contamination. The three-bag set retails for \$89.95 with individual bags available separately. All these products are just a few from the huge range Spika has to offer, so for more information and a list of stockists visit spika.com.au



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SIFA



The image features seven knives arranged vertically against a dark, textured background. From left to right: 1. A knife with a light-colored, possibly bone or wood, handle and a straight blade. 2. A knife with a reddish-brown wooden handle and a straight blade; the blade has 'DEWEY' and 'Made in Australia' engraved on it. 3. A knife with a dark, textured handle and a blade with a circular pattern. 4. A knife with a light-colored, possibly bone or wood, handle and a straight blade. 5. A knife with a dark, textured handle and a straight blade. 6. A knife with a light-colored, possibly bone or wood, handle and a straight blade. 7. A knife with a dark, textured handle and a straight blade.

GETTING *a handle* ON THINGS

John Dunn on the importance
of a good grip



After the blade, the haft or handle is the other major component of a knife. Apart from giving the user something to safely hang on to, the handle also provides a means of guiding the knife and in doing so, turns what would otherwise be a pointy piece of metal with at least one sharp edge, into a useful tool which can be manipulated to do all sorts of amazing work.

Like the blades they work with, some handles are simple in construction while others can become quite complex works of art, though either way their usefulness is defined by how they're married to the blade. Regardless of the materials they use, knife handles can be classified as one of three types – full-tang, partial or half-tang and through-tang. Each has its merits and drawbacks, supporters and critics but for most people I really don't think it makes much difference so long as the knife is performing the tasks being asked of it.

Full-tang knives

As the name would imply, the blade and the tang, that part of the knife around which a handle is constructed, are made from a single piece of metal with the tang running the full length of the handle. Some knives don't have any other materials attached to the tang, relying on the metal to provide sufficient grip to the user's hand. While there may be sound practical or ideological reasons for that, such knives are the exception rather than the rule, as all the rest provide something to hang on to.

A length of synthetic cord or piece of

leather thong wrapped round the tang will provide a better grip than the bare tang, though most knives have handles which are much more substantial and comfortable to use. In a sign of the times we live in, it's not uncommon to see handles made from different synthetic materials, the plasticised handles found on butchers knife rolls being a good example. Other materials include G10, Micarta and even stabilised wood - resin-impregnated wood which looks and feels like the real deal but is much more stable under the most adverse conditions.

For dinosaurs like me the best handle materials are natural such as native timbers, antler, horn and bone. For those in search of something different, materials such as fossilized mammoth teeth and ivory is legally available when you look in the right places, though given their relative rarity it almost goes without saying their use will increase the cost of the knife.

The individual pieces of material used on either side of a tang are known as scales and are attached using rivets, pins, bolts and industrial grade epoxy glues (or a combination thereof). Cutlers rivets are still used by some makers and, commonly found on old butchers' knives, rivets have historically done a great job without the help of any glues. Given that wooden handles may shrink away from the rivets over time, a lot of old knives with rivets consequently have loose handles which sometimes can be tightened, sometimes not. I believe Cutlers rivets are still available and while I know how they work I must admit I've never used them as there are easier ways to attach handles.

From left: Finnish-made puukko knife with through-tang handle by Martini; Partial-tang with glued and pinned handles; Partial-tang by John with pinned and glued tang; Three full-tang knives by Steve Sunk, Green River and John; Partial-tang with glued and pinned handles; Partial-tang knife by Rob Podesta with glued tang; Knife from US with a pair of Cutlers rivets securing the handle and tang.

Having a solid grip on a knife remains a vital consideration

Riveted tangs on puukko knives.



Finnish-made puukko knives with through-tang handles, stamped Husqvarna.

Many scales are attached using a combination of epoxy glue and pins and the latter can be made from stainless steel, brass, bronze, copper and various synthetics, though all do the same job of locating the scales on the tang and helping to hold them in place. Pins can be as plain or fancy as required but whatever they're made from, they must be a close fit in their respective holes then glued into place for security.

Some knifemakers use specialised bolts to hold the scales on their knives, the two most common types being Corby and Loveless, though other designs are available. The heads of the bolts are counter-sunk into the scale material, connected to one another by a screw thread through the tang and, when tightened, provide a mechanical fixture which in conjunction with a good glue are unlikely to come loose.

Once tightened into place the heads of the bolts are filed or ground off to present as a disc of metal in the finished scale. In the case of Loveless bolts the centre disc will have a visible contrasting centre, especially if the connecting thread is made from a different material. Corby and Loveless bolts are made from either brass or stainless steel and can be manufactured successfully in a good home workshop.

Partial or half-tang

Once again the name is self-descriptive, with the short tang of the knife contained within the handle where it's secured by glue and/or pins. The tang may be fitted into a blind hole in a one-piece handle, into a slot along the top edge of a one-piece handle or into a split two-piece handle that's internally recessed to accept the tang then glued or pinned back together.

Some people will tell you partial tang knives aren't as strong as those with a full tang and for heavy duty use that's probably true. I recently saw a partial tang pig sticker with a moulded plastic handle that had snapped off at the very end of the tang, a situation which apparently caused some consternation at the time. That could probably be seen as an extreme example

but I'd suggest that if a knife's being used as intended, the chances of such a failure would be limited provided the handle and tang are solidly pinned and glued together.

From a maker's point of view, half-tang knives can be made from pieces of steel which are too short to make a full-tang, a far better prospect than throwing the left-over steel in the scrap bin. In the past few years I've made quite a few partial-tang knives with composite handles which mix different types of wood or synthetic materials with G10 or shim metal spacers between them. Some people like them, others don't and in a hand-made knife it all comes down to the customers' choice.

Through-tang knives

These have a tang extending through the length of the handle from front to back. The tang may be integral with the blade or can be an additional separate length of metal welded to the back end. Some knives have a butt cap which accepts and conceals a thread cut on to the end of the tang - tightening the cap draws the handle fast against the bolster at the front end and, when used in conjunction with a good glue, this is a very secure way to attach a handle.

Through-tang construction is most often seen on European-made knives, notably the Finnish puukko and I have three in my collection, all with through-tangs rivetted into a rectangular hole in the butt cap. One has a composite handle of wood and leather washers, the second a handle made from layers of birch bark compressed between the bolster and butt cap, while the third Martini-made puukko I've used for years has a one-piece birchwood handle.

For what it's worth, handles made of stacked leather washers have a reputation for rusting out, especially if the washers are cut from chrome-tanned leather. Most experienced knife users have their own ideas about the type of handle they prefer and opinions obviously vary, but if the individual is happy with whatever he or she is using, who's to say they're wrong? Whatever your choice, having a solid grip on a knife remains a vital consideration. ●



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MAN'S best friend DESERVES THE BEST

How To Train Your Gundog
by Ben Randall
Review by Leon Wright

Unless you're heavily involved in gundog trialling you probably, like me, have never heard of gundog trainer Ben Randall. Yet in the UK, his home country, he's well known as a champion trainer and owner of Beggarbush Gundog Kennels, a world-renowned facility which has produced champion dogs and winning lines globally. As a professional trainer the author has developed his own technique of gundog training which he calls BG Foundations training methods.



Randall's credits and accomplishments make for extensive reading. Over the years, apart from winning back-to-back British Cocker Spaniel Championships in 2011 and '12, he's judged at those Championships as well as the English Springer Spaniel Championships. There he also assisted in running competitions and organising teams of guns, so is very familiar with the trialling world and, to top it off, is also an A-panel Spaniel judge.

Coming from a hunting background and dealing with gundogs from an early age, mainly Labradors and Cocker Spaniels, it seems logical he'd eventually move into the training arena. A love of gundogs, especially his favoured Cockers, really shines through and is a credit to the man. You only have to turn to social media and watch him working his Cockers on various YouTube videos to see the love and respect he has for his dogs and how eager they are to work for him in return.

So writing *How To Train Your Gundog* would've come as no surprise to those in the game and it's a pretty comprehensive work. Comprising some 322 pages and 25 chapters, the book covers everything from the day a prospective owner inspects a litter of puppies right through the dog's life.

The book centres around his BG Foundations training methods and takes the owner of a new pup through all the stages to becoming an accomplished gundog that's a pleasure to take hunting. As well as training, Randall delves into other areas such as dog welfare and health problems, trialling, participating in organised shoots and one chapter I especially liked, being hunters' etiquette and respect. The book is illustrated via a generous helping of high-quality photographs supplied by Sarah Farnworth which really add to the overall presentation.

One small but interesting inclusion is how they deal with a wounded bird, an issue which has raised some concern here in Australia and can certainly be adopted by our duck hunting fraternity. 'The Priest' method is similar to the one fishermen use and is well worth considering.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter devoted to troubleshooting which covers a number of situations that may arise during training or a day in the field, the best way to overcome these and put the gundog back on track so to speak. Randall's method of handling treats and rewards during training, as well as starting the pup's learning as early as possible (albeit slowly) may raise some eyebrows, though you can't argue with success and the BG Foundations Training regime certainly delivers that. I've always wondered how a gundog is taught to move left and right when at a distance and, thanks to this book, I now understand.

All up I consider *How To Train Your Gundog* to be up there with the best of them. It's well worth adding to your bookcase as it has plenty for the new hunter with his first gundog and as a reference book for the more experienced owner too. The book is available online at gundog-journal.com from around \$75 plus postage and handling. ●

Weather the storm

New Model 70 will handle anything, says **Chris Redlich**

Extreme Weather is right at home as a mountain rifle.

Fewer sporting rifles attract as much mention as the Winchester Model 70 which, despite its various changes through the decades, has enjoyed enormous popularity. I've always been attracted to the iconic Model 70 and after owning a 'Featherweight' in 6.5mm, can speak from experience. So when the chance arose to review an Extreme Weather in .308 Win I couldn't refuse.

What is the Extreme Weather?

The Model 70 Extreme Weather is Winchester's answer to its competitors'

mountain rifle offerings, a niche market driven by those who push the limits in challenging environments. Known for high quality manufacturing, Winchester have engaged the services of Bell & Carlson to equip the rifle with a synthetic stock.

So what's all the hype around synthetic stocks? The simple answer is they're lightweight and durable. I love the look of a classic walnut stock but when the terrain soars above sea level and clouds set in, that's when you start to appreciate practicality over looks. In keeping with tradition though, Winchester has done a superb job

in maintaining that classic Model 70 profile in a synthetic stock.

Made from a synthetic composite to provide a rock-solid mounting platform, the Bell & Carlson stock is free-floating from the barrel and, in the absence of checkering, the surface has a spider-web textured grey and matte black base to enhance grip in adverse weather. A raised cheekpiece enables solid cheek weld for sighting and the one-inch thick Pachmayr decelerator pad helps train felt recoil from heavy-kicking cartridges such as .300 Win Mag. No mountain hunter would venture into



Rapid 'pointability' and target acquisition thanks to the combination of lightweight fluted barrel and Optika 5 scope.

the wilderness without the aid of a sling, so rounding out the stock's inclusions are securely fastened standard front and rear stainless sling swivels.

Over time I've become familiar with many styles of rifle actions and each have their advantages and drawbacks. The new Model 70s have stuck with the tried and tested pre-'64 controlled round-feed version, which has its roots planted firmly in the original Mauser 98 design. Mauser actions weren't always known for smooth cycling compared to push-feeds, though the added security of a large full-length claw gripping one quarter of the case rim gives peace of mind for reliable case extraction. There are two North American-owned gunmakers who've refined the Mauser action beautifully and Winchester is one of them.

The stainless steel bolt action of the Extreme Weather cycles as smooth as you like and each cartridge picks up and chambers without fault, thanks to gentle sloping of the feed ramp and coned breech. Two large locking lugs ensure solid chambering and although the Model 70 has a 90-degree bolt throw, it won't interfere with a sensible scope unless you foolishly mount a large one with a ridiculously oversized ocular bell on low rings.

The three-position wing-style safety operates easily by the tip of the thumb, enabling bolt and firing pin lock (rearwards) and firing pin lock only in the middle position for safe bolt cycling. Initially critical of my own Model 70 trigger, this one seems

to be on the money. Although not the lightest of adjustable triggers, with permission from Winchester Australia I lowered the test rifle to the absolute minimum of (measured) 3lbs which felt crisp and broke sharply with no noticeable creep. Following the supplied instructions, trigger adjustment was simple and all it took was a few outward turns of the pressure screw with an Allen key.

Upon case retrieval the swept back bolt handle promotes a positive rearwards action. Empty cases are ejected well clear of the port thanks to the large blade ejector and, hiding under the claw body, are two gas ejection ports to dispel any gases in the event of a primer or case rupture. Rounding out the bolt's appeal and keeping with tradition once more is the attractive bolt body jewellery and Model 70 trademark classic knurled bolt knob that's easy to grip regardless of conditions.

The stainless steel receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounts and its specifications have conveniently remained unchanged for decades. If you've some old Model 70 mounts lying around, chances are you won't be reaching into your pocket to fork out for new ones. I attached my own Weaver-style bases in preparation for scope-mounting later.

Using the magnet test I discovered the hinge floor plate is stainless steel, while the trigger guard and magazine bottom are cast alloy. The magazine well for .308 Win and 6.5 Creedmoor chamberings holds five

rounds and three for Magnum cartridges. Importantly, the floorplate (or magazine trapdoor) pops open cleanly by pressing the release button forward of the trigger guard, ensuring fumble-free and safe extraction of unfired cartridges. I was impressed by the precise machining and fit of all metallic surfaces, testament to the quality of Portuguese manufacture.

As with all good rifles the barrel is the business end and "if you ain't got that right, it won't matter how good the action is". The Extreme Weather in .308 Win has a slim 55cm (22") button-rifled stainless steel barrel with 1-in-12 twist. The recessed crown measures a skinny 16mm and tapers gently to the receiver, while parallel barrel fluting adds to the overall flow of stainless steel work, mating beautifully to the synthetic stock. After familiarising myself with the technical side it was time for field testing.



Trigger adjustment made easy with the turn of an Allen key.

Range and field testing

Not surprisingly Winchester Australia preferred I use their supplied optic for testing. I received a new Meopta Optika 5 2-10x42 scope based on a one-inch tube and though initially a little critical of its bulk, it proved a good choice and once mounted was obstruction-free in the low rings (for a comprehensive review see the May 2023 *Australian Shooter*). Scoped and loaded the complete rifle and optics package weighed just under 4kg and looked the real deal.

I received a swag of Winchester factory ammunition including 150-grain Ballistic Silver Tips, 168-grain Berger Match and a box of time-proven 150-grain Power Points. As with most families though, there's usually a problem child and on my first and second range test the rifle didn't like what I was feeding it. Winchester guarantee 1MOA accuracy, yet all groups using the supplied ammo hovered around 2MOA.

After years of reloading and range testing various types of ammo I've become quite fussy on accuracy for good reason, as when it comes to a one-shot kill it's important to me a rifle shoots well. I've always felt if a gun doesn't perform well on paper it won't improve out hunting and I believe this rifle has potential for better accuracy with a little more effort.

Attention to detail got the better of me so I bought some .308 Win reloading dies and, knowing the review rifle was capable of more than just good looks, I began testing. Firstly I believe the Extreme Weather's lightweight barrel in .308 Win and slow twist-rate of 1-in-12 isn't suitable for 180-grain bullets and marginal for stabilising 150-grains accurately, being better suited to lighter bullet weights of 125-140 grains. There isn't a huge selection of .308 bullets in that range but they're out there and I'd rather a rifle shoot lighter bullets well than heavier ones poorly.

My hard work paid off as the new handloads were like giving candy to a spoilt brat and the 'problem child' was now content with a diet of 130-grain bullets. In fact my



The best of the supplied 150-grain factory loads was close to 2", reinforcing a theory of the rifle enjoying lighter loads.



Time-proven reliability of the pre-'64 controlled round-feed action mating precisely to the Bell & Carlson synthetic stock.

first trial load landed three shots into a ridiculously tight group of .172 MOA. This proved my point of correct barrel to bullet-weight pairing and the evidence I'd achieved on paper gave me enough confidence to load a batch of handloads for hunting.

Rifle slung and into the hills I went. It had been months since my last hunting trip (over in New Zealand) but as I scaled the 'big ones', the view from the top of my south-east Queensland deer property was rewarding. Although deer had vacated the area and appeared to have relocated to the flats for greener pastures, my field testing of the Extreme Weather proved the rifle has earned its place in the mountain hunting category.

There's obviously not much Australian game the .308 Win cartridge can't handle

and, underlining the Extreme Weather's ability, my son took a large wild boar easily with the 130-grain handloads on a hunt together. The lightweight, slim-line design enabled Carl to confidently take the pig at full pace as it attempted to flee the paddock.

Conclusion

Despite those ammo challenges I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Model 70 Extreme Weather. With the right bullet-to-barrel combination I'm certain it'll please any mountain hunter looking for a modernised version of what is a classic rifleman's rifle. Costing around \$2595 at time of writing, that's a competitive price for a quality firearm with decades of heritage. More at winchesteraustralia.com.au ●



Bolt jewellery and knurled bolt knob adds to the Model 70's traditional appeal.



Horses in the paddock at 100m in 'white hot', 'green hot' and 'blue hot'.

Hot property

Burris thermal scope no budget-buster, says **Matthew Godson**

My first impressions of the Burris BTS35 V2 thermal scope as I lifted it from the box was that it certainly looked and felt rugged in design. In the hand with mounting system and batteries installed, it weighed around 940 grams and an American Defense quick-detach Picatinny mount is included, which saves you a few hundred dollars. This also means flexibility to easily switch your scope from one firearm to another and maintain reasonable zero while doing so.

Ergonomically, everything you need is comfortably in reach and there are only three function controls - the power button, menu button and rotary knob. Once the device is on the power button also controls shutter calibration, the menu button is pressed to display options and you make the selections you want by turning the rotary knob. When not in menu function this knob decreases and increases digital zoom.

The features and specifications of the BTS35 V2 are impressive for a thermal scope at this price point, with a 35mm F1.0 lens that provides clear images on a 1024 x 768 OLED display. For the tech-minded, it comes with a 400 x 300 VOx thermal sensor offering

a reasonable ≤ 50 mK NETD, a pixel pitch of 12 microns and 50Hz refresh rate. With these specifications the scope produces thermal images that'll remain relatively sharp during movement when tracking targets and detecting temperature differences at longer ranges. It offers a generous and wide field of view of $7.8^\circ \times 5.9^\circ$ and claimed detection distance of 1000m for a deer-sized animal.

With a base magnification of 3.2x expanding to 12.7x with 1-4x digital zoom, the scope will handle most shooting situations at short to medium range and offers five colour palettes including white hot, black hot, red hot, green hot and blue hot. It has picture-in-picture (PIP) mode which gives the user an option to position the PIP window in the upper left, middle or right of the display. There's also auto stand-by, auto power off and energy-saving modes. Stand-by can be set to off, five, 10 or 15 minutes and auto power to off, five, 30 or 60 minutes with these features helping maximise battery life in the field.

The BTS35 V2 has 10 reticle options and you can adjust the colour of those and illumination to suit your needs, the choice of reticle base colours including red, green, blue, black, white and yellow. Users can select a centre or cross-dot illumination point that's separate from the base reticle and that centre dot or cross colour can also be changed to any of the above colours.

The scope offers a stadiametric rangefinder to estimate distance with four stadia

target options available as a reference being rabbit, coyote, hog and deer. The way this function works is you align the lower horizontal line with the bottom of the target, then use the rotary knob to change the width between the upper and lower horizontal lines until the upper is aligned with the top of the target. The scope will then automatically calculate and display an estimated distance based on the size of the reference animal.

The scope comes with an internal 18650 battery and a second replaceable one for five-plus hours of runtime. That extra battery allows the flexibility of having spares to hot-swap during activities to extend your runtime in the field, while connecting to a power source via the USB cable enables live charging of the internal battery. Real-time video streaming and photo capture is available on the BurrisConnect app and as the device doesn't have memory, all recorded activities need to be stored that way. This also allows you to make changes to device settings so you can adjust palette colour, operate the stadiametric rangefinder, tweak contrast, hotspot tracking, PIP and more.

The first job with any new scope is to set up zero and the BTS35 V2 has a set minimum 50m zeroing distance value so that's where you start. Depending on the size of your target you may need to fire a few shots at short distances to make sure point of aim (POA) and point of impact (POI) are both 'on paper' so to speak. This

Hot property

scope doesn't have a freeze function so you must record measurements of POI compared to POA to make the necessary adjustments.

The best way to do this is fire a group of three shots while aiming at the middle of the target. Measure the vertical and horizontal distance between group centre and target centre and, using the rotary knob, make the necessary elevation and windage adjustments (in millimetres) by clicking through the right amount of modification equal to your recorded measurements. Once changes are saved, shoot again to make sure zero is achieved (this process must be repeated for all profiles you save on the scope).

Generally when using a 22LR rifle I sight-in at 25m, though on this occasion I had to push it out to 50m to fit the device's minimum zeroing distance so the stadiametric rangefinder would be effective. With zeroing complete I test-fired on a target at 25m and was happy with the result, confident any rabbit up to 75m that dared to show itself would be within my target range.

Not having built-in memory, picture/video button and auto-recording functionality does make it a little tricky to capture images of your activities. Having to operate a device while trying to engage targets is difficult if you don't have time on your side, though generally speaking working in the dark with thermal gives you that time. Having your phone connected to the app before you start lets you quickly press 'record' to capture the moments you want.

Tackling a few rabbit populations on small blocks, the BTS35 V2 proved an effective and easy-to-use device. The field of view offered plenty of visibility to scan paddocks and vegetation as I walked, while the zoom function brought more distant targets close enough to identify and engage with if necessary. It was comfortable to operate with one hand and the rotary knob allowed easy zooming in and out using fingertips, with both the focusing ring and diopter adjustment being smooth in operation.

All palette choices provided good images of both landscape and targets alike. You can activate the 'hot track' function or change scene modes to highlight objects with the highest temperature to help find potential targets dependent on conditions. A handy function if temperature differences between day and night aren't extreme is leaving background heat in the landscape. Reticle choices and options are the individual's choice and with what's on offer there will probably be several you'll take a fancy to.

When targeting rabbits at distances of around 50m, I found images produced by

the sensor through the F1.0 lens and OLED display to be fairly crisp for a unit with a ≤ 50 mK NETD. It certainly isn't the most sensitive thermal sensor on the market but it's reasonable quality at a sensible price. I do enjoy testing thermal devices on small targets such as rabbits because the output can only be better on bigger animals with larger thermal signatures. If you can clearly see a rabbit at 50m there's no doubt you'll spot larger targets at ranges beyond 150m.

To prove this point I viewed and captured images of horses in paddocks at ranges between 100-150m and one thing I did notice is that what you see through the eyepiece is much better quality than any saved images. For example, the rabbit I captured was less pixelated in appearance through the eyepiece to the point where I could clearly see its ears as it moved around. That crispness wasn't evident in the recorded images and I could also see far more detail in the horses' bodies through the eyepiece than in stored images.

During testing I removed the scope from the rifle several times since my initial zeroing and found that upon reattachment it retained adequate zero. This gave me confidence that the inclusion of the American Defense quick-detach Picatinny mount will help provide flexibility and consistency straight out of the box for anyone buying a BTS35 V2 thermal scope. Burris warrants its thermal optics are free of defects in workmanship and materials for three years from date of purchase. RRP of the Burris BTS35 V2 is around \$3799. ●

*Plenty of visibility
to scan paddocks
as I walked*





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GREAT expectations

But the hunt won't always go
as planned, warns **Sam Garro**



By all accounts, safaris or guided hunts promoted to attract hunters in pursuit of big game or exotic species are expected to deliver as advertised, showcasing successful hunters with their hard-won trophy animals in spectacular surroundings. Yet while such high expectations are founded and successful hunts should ensue, expectations must be moderated or managed to avoid possible disappointment in the event arrangements don't go to plan or are outside your control.

It can also take an outing or two to fully appreciate what's involved for a successful hunt to occur, from the initial booking to procurement of that elusive trophy. But even if a hunt doesn't meet your expectations, especially in some unique and picturesque setting, the adventure, experience and memories are everlasting. I found it only made me more determined to return, though there are also things you can do for a more enjoyable hunting experience.

Promotional material

Some guided hunts promoted on leaflets and websites depict hunters with impressive trophies from tusked boars and antlered stags to wide-horned buffaloes. These are usually carefully selected images taken over a number of years with no guarantees a similar trophy will be obtained, although best endeavours will be made with a lesser representative one being the norm. Then there are those who operate where game is sustainably managed, depicting examples over consecutive years leading up to the most recent which better indicate a hunter's prospects.

Choosing an outfitter

For any intended hunt it's important to establish the credentials and integrity of the operator beforehand. Testimonials from satisfied hunters or friends are invaluable, as sadly there's the odd unscrupulous operator who promises everything yet delivers nothing while disappearing with your money.

An outfitter will normally tailor things to the individual's needs and preferences, taking into account his or her hunting and shooting ability, physical fitness relative to the terrain, eating habits and any other special requirements. Direct contact with more than one operator is recommended

Dave Wilson and his Vizsla hound glassing for a red stag in New Zealand.

Great expectations

to compare hunt types, facilities on offer and pricing, bearing in mind cost will also vary depending on accommodation type and number of participants. Two hunters attached to one guide compared to one-on-one will be cheaper.

Air travel protocol

When it comes to firearms I prefer to use my own, though it can be advantageous to avail yourself of the outfitter's 'for hire' appropriate for the game pursued and ammunition at not such an onerous cost. If taking a firearm on an aircraft within Australia, there are certain protocols to follow like declaring it before boarding and ammunition limitation. As requirements in this area may change over time - and remembering not all airlines are receptive to carrying such items - it's best to check directly with the individual carrier and follow procedures to avoid delays.

Provisioning

Depending on the climatic conditions of the area, it's important to dress and provision appropriately for a more comfortable and enjoyable experience. In tropical conditions of the Top End and similar places, breathable, full-length light clothing and head cover, hydration bladder backpack and ankle-supporting boots help you better tolerate the often oppressive heat, humidity and rugged terrain. Conversely in winter or colder places like the New Zealand peaks or Victoria's High Country, thermal wear and/or insulating clothing, thick woollen socks and sturdy boots with good sole grip go a

long way to keeping you warm and better placed to manage the elements.

Be prepared to get your hands dirty. Take a quality skinning knife for meat and trophy retrieval as while an outfitter will assist, there's more satisfaction in doing the job yourself. A digital camera with 12 megapixels and 16 optical zoom to capture those special moments and a GPS and compact first-aid kit for ease of mind are also important.

Fitness and mindset

You can be an excellent shot and have all the right intentions but if you're not fit enough to handle the demands of a hunt, whether it involves trekking distances, tackling challenging terrain or wading through muddy water, you're doing yourself an injustice. My good friend Graeme, who was in his sixties and an avid deer hunter at the time, walked more kilometres than I care to count in the months leading up to the deer rut to ensure he could successfully hunt red stags in the ranges of the Brisbane Valley.

Depending on the hunt booked, there should also be a mental preparedness to expect new and challenging experiences in often unfamiliar scenarios like early rises before first light, long stalks and returning to camp late, changing weather conditions and nuisance elements like spiders, mosquitoes and flies. But if we accept that we're in Mother Nature's embrace and it's only temporary, it'll help better tolerate these conditions. At the same time we're also hugely rewarded by

the sights and sounds of animals and birds unique to the area, exhilarating scenery and stunning sunsets and sunrises.

Taking instruction

Now and then a professional hunter (PH) or guide's directive may appear a little challenging but it's for good reason, as they have a duty of care to the hunter, themselves and property. Any ego or attitude should be left at home no matter your perceived experience and knowledge. It's surprising what can be learned when hunting certain species, especially dangerous game like Cape or Asiatic water buffalo for the first time.

Making the shot

Target practice at varying distances and in different stances is recommended as the animal's position or location relative to yours may dictate the angle and vital area to take the shot. Normally, the organiser will arrange a target session beforehand to ensure your rifle is properly aligned for accurate shooting. While an experienced PH or guide will be on hand to advise where to aim for a humane kill, it's important the hunter is familiar with an animal's vital organs when stalking alone or away from company.

Managing expectations

A safari hunt anywhere should be approached with an open mind and no expectation of necessarily bagging the biggest and best trophy on day one. While some game species regularly

Challenging experiences in often unfamiliar scenarios

Guide and assistant in South Africa searching for Cape buffalo.





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Great expectations



Buffalo safari in Arnhem Land with two youngsters sighted on the way to camp.



Guide Bill (right) and client with a Kudu taken in Namibia.



Guide assisting with deer meat retrieval.

frequent or remain around watering holes and mineral or salt licks, others tend to roam the landscape and may take longer to locate. Even the most experienced hunters have devoted days of arduous stalking before securing a trophy animal in the last hour of the last day, though most guides will have regularly visited and assessed game areas to ensure a representative or better class of animal is attainable.

Moderating or managing your expectations also helps when things don't go to plan. A few years ago, feral pig and boar hunts were promoted on a Cape York cattle property newly opened to hunters. On the second day after scoring a couple of medium boars around property dams and another in a dry creek bed, a rapidly expanding grass-fire sparked by dry lightning and fanned by strong winds burnt a large section of the area and quickly put an end to the trip. Thankfully, the outfitter graciously offered a return hunt at no extra cost and I expect others have had similar experiences.

Then there's the odd time through chance or luck when a dejected hunter returning empty-handed from an arduous day's stalk locates game in the most unexpected place near camp or their parked

vehicle. And don't forget the hunter who dropped a record trophy animal at his first attempt when others had been trying unsuccessfully for years.

Trophy expectations

In respect to what represents a suitable or representative trophy animal, it's really a matter of what the individual is satisfied with. Some chase only record-breaking horns, antlers or tusks and unblemished skins or pelts, others prefer reasonably sized but symmetrically shaped antlers, some target odd or peculiarly shaped horns for their uniqueness, while many are content to live the experience and take a meat animal. In the end the animal harvested, irrespective of its impressiveness or lack of it, should be respected for itself and for fulfilling a long-held aspiration.

Conclusion

Everything being equal, you take from a guided hunt what you put into it. While the hunt should play out as promoted, understanding what's involved, preparation and moderating your expectations helps greatly. The overall experience is what counts - and the chance to hopefully do it all again. ●



Guide Graham Williams of Australian Buffalo Hunters (left) and Andrew Hepner SSAA BGRC with a magnificent NT trophy buff



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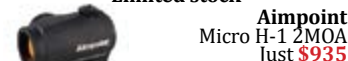
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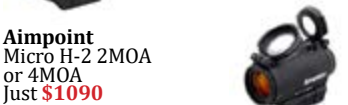
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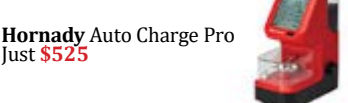
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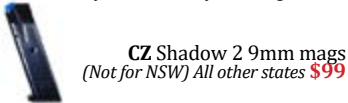
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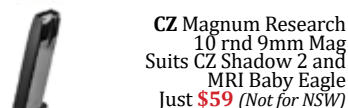
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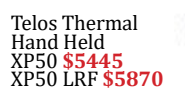
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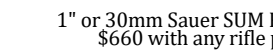
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Blown away

How a chopper squad foiled Derek Nugent's trophy moment

Down the years I've seen many things compromise a hunt, from the fickle nature of the wind or challenge of rugged terrain, while on occasion it has simply been inattention or poor adhesion to the principles of good stalking. Sometimes it's my fault with a shot missed (it happens to us all) or the misadventures of fellow hunters, which has seen otherwise gettable game disappear over a ridge.

As all hunters can attest, sometimes it's just poor timing or bad luck which can make or break a hunt, as the hunting gods are clearly a law unto themselves. However, I'd never have imagined in my wildest dreams a helicopter would derail a very promising hunt and, in the process, potentially cost a cracker of a trophy. Yet amazingly this was the case last April during the roar.

Day 1: They're on

As is our family tradition, my son Joseph had taken leave from the ADF over Easter and travelled south to hunt in the roar. Together with regular hunting mate Dave, we travelled the hour or so to our block, hoping for a successful outcome as having inspected images from the four trailcams secreted around the place, it was obvious we were a good chance.



Spotted on the wallow but spared by the "let 'em go and let 'em grow" policy.

Multiple freezer fillers in the form of young spikers seemed to be around as were the odd respectable older heads sporting nice racks. The plan as always was to use the first day to gain a feel for how the roar was progressing and go from there. Mid-afternoon saw each of us move to a different area of the property to man some hides overlooking known hot-spots. Dave positioned himself over 'The Wallow', I targeted 'The Intersection' while Joseph chose to stalk some tracks on another part of the property. As Dave and I moved into position we heard several distinct roars from the area Joseph had elected to investigate so things sounded promising.

Several hours later just on dusk we rendezvoused at the shed to relate our various experiences. I'd seen nothing at all while Dave had a nice eight-pointer come into the wallow but, being of the ethically sound 'let 'em go and let 'em grow' persuasion, he enjoyed the show rather than take a shot. Joe had managed to stalk close to a few stags, been roared at and probably detected as the animals promptly went into stealth mode. It was while having this conversation an absolute ruckus exploded from a ridge to our south-east.

There was a big guy out there and he was in fine voice though for us there were two insurmountable problems: firstly he was probably just over the fence on the neighbour's land and secondly it was pitch black. So our only option was to sit back and spend the evening listening to him and what appeared to be about eight others going at it. We made our plans for the morning and called it a night.

Day 2: Chopper chaos

After a somewhat sleepless night due to the anticipation of what the nocturnal voicings of several stags seemed to promise, we arose just on dawn. Conditions were perfect with a slight fog starting to lift and no wind as the action seemed to have switched from the south eastern to north western side of the block. We could hear several stags loudly proclaiming their dominance of the ridges so immediately set off up a track in pursuit. One was roaring loudly and continuously as we closed the gap but our plan faltered as it became clear he was making his stand from a series of small meadows atop the opposite ridge.

The gully between us was impenetrable thanks to thick lantana. Our only option was to abandon the stalk and use a dozer track to move in behind him in clear country and try to reconnect. The lack of wind made the option a good one and 15 minutes later the three of us were climbing a steep track away to his left while he continued to roar, albeit not so frequently, apparently unaware of our presence. Another five minutes and we'd be in position to resume our stalk and hopefully grass a nice trophy, though it was then the hunting gods boomed: 'Not today, boys!'

As we crested the last obstacle into some clearer country, up over the ridge came the neighbour's bright red mustering helicopter. To make matters worse it proceeded to cross the fence line on to our place at an altitude of 40-50m and 'buzz' the knoll we expected to find our stag on. The final insult came as it lazily traversed the knoll and adjacent ridgeline for the next 10 minutes.

At first we'd no idea what to think. Were we about to witness some hi-tech poaching via aerial shooting? No. Had the occupants spied the stag and his harem and simply come in for a look, unaware of our presence? Maybe. Was there a mischievous intent to drive the deer over the fence-line to 'safety' after having spotted us and perceived our purpose? Quite possibly, even though I like to think not.

But who really knows as perhaps it was just a combination of blissful ignorance on their part and plain bad luck on ours, though needless to say we were severely disappointed. I've always respected the neighbour's fenceline as marking a no-go area so it would've been nice for that chopper to have extended the same courtesy, especially if they were aware of our presence.

So we continued on dejectedly as the morning had slipped away from us, though we did manage to get the sit on a small deer about 20 minutes later but he was well out of range and disappearing at a canter. We pushed on to the western extremities of our hunting ground and located a nice concentration of animals with four roaring stags and a handful of does.

Joe spent the next 20 minutes roaring with some success in terms of them responding to him and briefly emerging from cover to investigate, though we couldn't draw them into crossing the fence and back to our property. We'd nothing to show for our efforts so headed back to camp for some maintenance, not really sure what tomorrow would bring. The complete silence overnight and absence of even a single roar didn't fill us with confidence though.



A spiker taken for the freezer on the final morning.

Day 3: Success of sorts

The night had been devoid of sound and so was the morning with absolutely no evidence of deer to be seen or heard. You wouldn't have guessed we were in the midst of what appeared a very active roar. It seemed that chopper had really done a number on the big boys who'd obviously decided to relocate to quieter surrounds. Nevertheless we geared up and headed out.

We climbed to the same part of the property where deer had been the previous day, hoping for the best and were standing near a gateway when the gods again intervened, this time in our favour. Dave and I were busy mumbling about 'bad luck and helicopters' when Joe quickly cycled his Tikka and went on the alert - we'd missed the telltale sound of animals moving through some lantana to our right but he hadn't.

We moved through the gate into an adjacent paddock and propped. Suddenly about 20m below us two animals broke cover, fortunately more curious than alarmed and in that very predictable red deer manner, they stopped to have a look back at us. Joe took the spiker, placing a .270 just behind his shoulder at about 35m. Surprisingly, the stag was able to haul himself upright with the doe well ahead of him as I feared we might yet lose a freezerful of venison and used a sidetrack to follow the female.

She wasn't fleeing with any real intent and I caught up with her at about 50m as she started to crest a ridge. I took aim but was forestalled on pulling the trigger as I heard Joe and Dave yell they'd located the

downed stag. We'd achieved success in claiming some venison which we duly harvested with the help of my son's new Buffalo River butchering kit, which acquitted itself admirably. And so ended one of the most bizarre and eventful roars of my life.

All's well that ends well


In the wash-up it's clear we achieved one of our goals in that we were heading home with eskies full of venison. Yet I do wonder what may have unfolded but for the untimely appearance of that helicopter, though of course there's no guarantee we'd have grassed the big fella. After all, we didn't even manage a look at him and he'd positioned himself on challenging ground which made for a testing stalk, though it would've been nice to have at least had the chance.

All the signs had been in our favour: the obvious presence of a number of mature stags, being able to pinpoint one and approach apparently undetected and for once no wind to contend with. The passing of time has healed the wounds and I can now appreciate the adventure we enjoyed over those few days.

I can almost laugh about it now - almost. In response we've since negotiated access to the property on our south-eastern boundary where it all began that first afternoon. Ironically when approached, the new owner said we should've jumped the fence and had a go at the stag regardless, though ethically I needed his permission. Hopefully this year's roar will see us secure the trophy those circumstances denied us, the gods permitting of course. Bloody chopper! ●

Look sharp!

Con Kapralos applauds Meopta's scope advances



The ocular on the Optika with fast-focus eyepiece and oversized magnification dial with characteristic grip.

Meopta Sport Optics based in the Czech Republic has become a serious player in the European market during the past 90 years, producing all manner of riflescopes along with binoculars and spotting scopes. What makes the firm stand out is the fact they do everything 'in-house', including manufacturing riflescopes for other top European brands. Be it sport optics, medical, scientific, industrial or commercial, Meopta Optika does it all.

The Meopro Optika6 line together with the Optika5 has largely replaced the standard bracket which encompassed a 3x magnification ratio. The Optika6 range naturally is based around a 6x zoom with predominately 30mm main tubes (one model has a 34mm tube). It's marketed as a 'Performance' optic as opposed to the Meosta, which is their 'Premium' line. Nevertheless, the Optika6 is a quality optic for the shooter and hunter seeking a rifle-scope punching well above its weight.

Winchester Australia sent *Australian Shooter* the Optika6 3-18 x 50 riflescope for review atop the new CZ 600 Alpha rifle. This particular model contains the BDC reticle in the second focal plane (SFP) with that reticle having the new DichroTech lens treatment.

External observations

The scope measures 371mm and weighs 848 grams, built around a 30mm one-piece main tube and has a hard anodised matte black finish that's resistant to marks and scratches. The objective bell is 58mm in diameter and houses the 50mm objective lens. A thin blue ring is a nice touch and carries the DichroTech 'DT' motif either

side of the bell. The objective bell tapers gradually to the 30mm main tube where there's plenty of room fore and aft of the turret housing for attaching scope rings.

This model, being non-illuminated, has its three turrets on the housing 'midships'. On the left is the parallax dial which is adjustable from 10 yards with graduations at 10, 20, 30, 50, 100, 200, 500 yards and infinity. The dial moves smoothly and has a grippy surface as have all caps and dials on the Optika6. The elevation and windage turrets are capped, being aluminium with a rubber collar on the outer rim (as does the parallax dial) and on removing these caps the well designed and laid-out dials are evident. Both have $\frac{1}{4}$ MOA (0.7cm) per click adjustment, with each dial having 25 MOA in quarter-minute graduation marks around its circumference.

Clicks adjustments are both positive and audible so there's no way you could make an error which is top-notch. Both elevation and windage have 84 MOA of total adjustment and dials are resettable to zero by loosening the small screw on the turret housing and moving the dial to line up the '0' mark with the index line on the tube body. While you could dial with these turrets they're more of a hunting style, hence them being capped, though the Optika6 range does include models with exposed turrets.

Moving to the rear of the scope the ocular is always a talking point and at 103mm long, its oversize magnification dial is either loved or loathed. I'll admit the dial can create issues when scope-mounting and have experienced this first-hand. It's something the designers at Meopta should address and slimming down the

oversize dial would be the easiest solution. That aside it was smooth to move from 3x through to 18x, with four provisions to install a zoom throw-lever to expediate movement if required. Apart from that small criticism the ocular has an adjustable eyepiece focus dial which lets you achieve a focused reticle to your eyesight. Adjustment is generous and easy to change without awkward locking rings.

Internal features

Meopta do know a thing or two about glass and how to create a superior lens. Their proprietary MeoDrop, MeoShield and MeoBright treatments produce the utmost in colour, clarity and contrast with excellent light transmission in the process. External lens surfaces are given the MeoShield treatment, a special anti-abrasion silicon coating applied as ions, which protect against scratching and abrasion even under the most challenging field conditions.

Together with the MeoShield process, Meopta further treats external lens surfaces with their MeoDrop hydrophobic coating. This patented layer repels water and dirt from the lens surfaces, resulting in rain and moisture forming compact droplets which easily slide off. Lenses with the MeoDrop treatment are easier to keep clean and stay like that for longer. While MeoShield and MeoDrop essentially protect external lens surfaces, Meopta's MeoBright lens application using ion technology is an anti-reflective coating applied to all optical components in the Optika6 as well as other riflescope, binocular and spotting scope models made by the company.

These anti-reflective layers provide 99.7 per cent light transmission for every optical component, giving exceptional overall



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Look sharp!



Meopta Optika 6 3-18x50 with DichroTech reticle as reviewed. The scope is supplied with bikini-style lens covers.



Elevation and windage dials are superbly designed and capped for added protection.

transmission of 91 per cent (in the Optika 6) while suppressing unwanted glare and reflective light. As a long-time user and reviewer of Meopta optics, I've found them to be among the brightest riflescopes on the market while being excellent in low light, especially the Meostar and tactical ZD models.

Reticle options on the Optika6 are also varied, being model dependent and some with illumination. The one on the review scope was of the BDC (Ballistic Drop Compensation) design and is enhanced with DichroTech lens technology. Essentially this is a patented coating process which enables reticles in multiple colour configurations to automatically adjust their tone and intensity in varying light conditions without the need for a battery.

DichroTech provides maximum contrast and visibility, enhancing target acquisition while improving shot placement. Meopta offer six of their most popular reticles with DichroTech and this is an exciting avenue in reticle technology without the need for illumination via a power source. In the field the system certainly delivered what was claimed by Meopta and I see this technology only advancing.

At the range and in the field

The scope was used to assess the CZ 600 Alpha's accuracy, shooting different Winchester hunting and target loads at distances out to 200m. The optic performed above expectations, with all adjustments made to the point of impact being precise and repeatable. I was unable to 'shoot the square' (the standard scope tracking exercise) due to ammunition limitations but I'm certain it would pass the test easily. Colour, clarity and resolution were excellent for a riflescope of this pedigree and price point.

In the field the Optika 6 3-18x50 surprised even further, especially when

shooting in challenging light conditions coupled with the DichroTech reticle. Put the reticle near anything which reflects light and the DichroTech coatings did their job, giving the reticle a 'natural illumination' that has to be seen to be believed. Coupled with the excellent 91 per cent light transmission, the Optika6 with DichroTech reticles make for a superb low-light hunting optic. It was superb.

In summary

The Meopro Optika6 range of riflescopes encompass technology found in the company's premium Meostar series but at a more attractive price. The six magnification options are available with a host of different reticles, some with illumination and some with DichroTech, while the glass is top tier and makes for a serious shooting or hunting riflescope. The BDC DichroTech specification retails for around \$1190. More at winchesteraustralia.com.au.

SPECIFICATIONS

Magnification: 3.0x-18.0x
Objective diameter (mm): 50
Tube (mm): 30
Field of view (m at 100m): 11.2-1.9
Eye relief (mm): 100
Focal plane: Second
Dioptric compensation: +2.0/-2.0
Light transmission (per cent): 91
Impact per click/cm at 100m: 0.7
Impact per click/MOA: 0.25
Elevation range (MOA): 84
Windage range (MOA): 84
Parallax correction: 10 yards - ∞
Reticle: BDC with DichroTech (other options available)
Length (mm): 371
Weight (g): 848
RRP \$1190
Distributor: Winchester Australia

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Bob clinches hat-trick in BGR 2023 Nationals

The area now known as Little River has been a gathering place for people for millennia. Eagle Park Shooting complex is situated just north of the Wurdi Youang which is an arrangement of stones set in place by the ancient civilisation who inhabited this area. There's little doubt that even then, hunters of the day would've held competitions to see who was best.



Six-time national champion Bob Christopher waits for his rifle to be cleared.

So over a full weekend last October, competitors from around Australia converged on Eagle Park Shooting Complex to find out who'd be the Big Game Rifle National Champion for 2023. The Big Game Rifle Club of Victoria hosted the event and were proud to show off their improved range which now has two firing lines. With this arrangement they were able to safely run concurrent events which proved a tremendous benefit, as 33 competitors from six states and the Northern Territory would've required organisers to work feverishly in order to get through the program. With the new firing line in use the whole weekend went extremely smoothly.

Competition was fierce but cordial as one of the best things about events like this is the chance to bring people together from across the country. They can enjoy the camaraderie and conversations about large calibre rifles and dangerous game hunting, while simultaneously honing their skills in firing such rifles in rapid fire events that simulate field shooting scenarios. Events such as Special Snap and Stopping Double Rifle simulate charging situations where competitors must shoot fast and accurately. Respectively, these events have courses of rapid fire involving eight shots in 35 seconds at one distance, and two brackets of four shots in 16 seconds at two set distances.

At the end of the weekend Bob Christopher from Victoria was the 2023 BGR National Champion, winning by a

Top guns: From left are 2023 runner-up Mark Hibbert, champion Bob Christopher, third-placed Graeme Wright and Victoria BGRC president Bill Poynton who presented the awards.

comfortable margin and securing his third straight victory in recent years, his sixth title since he began competing in the discipline in 2010. Queensland's Mark Hibbert and Graeme Wright finished second and third, respectively.

The Victoria BGRC also put on a series of four supplementary events, scores based on a combination of bullet weight, velocity, time and actual score. Course of fire was six shots in 40 seconds or three lots of four shots individually timed, with score divided by time and multiplied by a factor which equalised the impact of recoil. However, it meant that if you could shoot a large calibre rifle firing a heavy bullet both fast and accurately you'd a good chance of success. Victory in this one went to Neil Hibble ahead of Patrick Walsh and Graeme Wright.

Overall the weekend will be remembered for an extremely well-run championship, the camaraderie of shooters coming together at a common meeting place and a spirited but friendly competition to test their skills and find out who was best. Things really haven't changed much over the millennia, have they?

• Full results from the 2023 National Championships are on our Big Game Rifle discipline website. ●

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BP28	AXOR ARMS BUSHPIG 12G	28"	5+1	3.2kg	5	37.5cm



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OLD TIMER

Derek Nugent puts four new knives to the test

Whether as a fixed blade sheath option or a pocket-sized folder the humble knife is, or very much should be, a natural inclusion in every outdoors persons' kit. To this end I was given the chance to assess a quartet of the latest offerings from the Old Timer line as provided by Australian importer Aussie Outback Supplies, a WA-based family business established in 1991 by Darren and Adrienne Spencer.

Over time their children Brayden and Therese have also transitioned into roles with the company which is now one of Australia's largest wholesalers of knives and sharpening devices, offering a product line in excess of 1400 items across 20 different brands, including Old Timer, Sicut and Eze Sharp. Aussie Outback Supplies is also a specialist manufacturer of canvas and PVC products under the AOS brand for camping, hunting, fishing, 4WD, mining, agriculture and every other outdoor application imaginable. Some 95 per cent of these products are made in-house.

Old Timer knives

The brand is both well-known and widely respected in Australia, having been in the marketplace for 65 years. Established in the US in 1958 by Henry Baer as a product line by Schrade-Walden Cutlery Co, Old Timer

espoused the credo 'built for generations' in blade-ware they described as being "timeless tools meant to be passed down", an emphasis on quality which made heirlooms of their knives.

US manufacturing by the Imperial Schrade Corporation ceased in 2004 and moved to China though was recommenced just last year. Old Timer offers an extensive range of bladed products including field butchery kits, fixed-blade, folding and replaceable-blade knives with everything, regardless of point of origin, covered by a lifetime non-transferable 'Generational Warranty'.

I received four items for review - a folder and sheath knife from both the new Heritage and Generational series - and immediately noticed several elements of commonality. Firstly the finish of each knife was uniformly refined with no obvious manufacturing marks or flaws, everything precisely machined and assembled. In particular the two pocket knives functioned flawlessly with mechanisms tight, crisp and very secure yet easy to operate. Secondly, straight out the box both were keenly edged and good to go, though the sheath knives while 'factory' sharp did need a touch-up to reach what I call 'field' sharp.

Thirdly, the sheaths provided for the two fixed-blade knives were of robust construction with solid stitching and closure straps



I can't fault the fit, finish or performance of any of these knives

which were extremely tight and made for a reassuringly secure fit. There's no chance of these blades coming adrift when negotiating close terrain and in both a visual and tactile sense, the first impression of all four was one of quality and quiet confidence.

Heritage series - Origin: China

These are part of Old Timers' international range and are made from hard-wearing D2 steel, nickel silver guards/bolsters and laminate wooden handles. D2 is a semi-stainless tool steel, well regarded and widely used by knife manufacturers as it produces durable, robust and long-lasting blades with good resistance to corrosion and terrific edge-retention properties. It can take a bit of work to sharpen a D2 blade but, once done, it'll hold its edge for longer with less need for frequent resharpening.

The Middleman pocket knife features three D2 blades in a 6cm clip point ideal for precision cuts, a 5cm sheepsfoot blade designed for slicing while minimizing potential for accidental piercing (originally used to trim the hooves of sheep) and a 4cm pen blade which is essentially a drop-point affair. It has an overall length of 19cm when fully opened yet only 8cm when closed and weighs around 50g with a grey/black laminate wooden handle and nickel silver hardware. The mechanism was robust if initially a tad stiff, though will no doubt ease with time and usage. The blades locked safely into place, did all I asked of them and responded well to resharpening using both a ceramic and diamond tapered rod. RRP \$117.

The fixed blade sheath knife features a 12.5cm D2 drop-point blade, common in general purpose hunting knives. Its slightly convex spine curves down and away from the handle to form a V-shaped point where

it meets the knife's edge which results in an easily controllable point, dexterous tip, good depth of belly and impressive heel, all admirable qualities in a general purpose knife. It has a full tang which augments strength and durability and laminate wooden handle with textured grooves at key points for enhanced grip. This is a big solid affair at 26cm with a satisfying feel and heft to it, not a specialist blade but more an all-rounder. RRP \$156.

Generational series - Origin: US

These represent a return to where it all began for Old Timer. The line uses premium materials including handcrafted chestnut bone handles, 1095HC steel and nickel silver bolsters. 1095HC is desirable for blade-ware and particularly larger, heavy duty fixed blade knives as it's resistant to chipping, easy to sharpen and takes a very keen edge. It's a versatile steel representing a practical compromise between corrosion resistance, edge retention and ease of sharpening.

The Trapper pocket knife has two 1095HC blades, a 7.6cm clip-point and identically sized spey-point which, with its flat sharp edge and curved tip, allows for easy cutting with a low risk of puncture (originally designed to castrate animals). This one has an overall length of 17cm open and 9cm closed and weighs around 80g. The mechanism is encased in a bone handle which is heavily textured for both aesthetic and practical purposes, while nickel silver bolsters complete the look. It has an extremely smooth mechanism and came razor sharp out of the box. RRP \$232.

The Sharpfinger fixed blade is 18cm long and features a 9cm 1095HC steel trailing-point blade, essentially making it a specialist skinner and game-meat recovery



Heritage series Middleman folder.



Heritage fixed-blade.

You can trust an Old Timer



Generational series Trapper and Sharpfinger.

tool. Such blades are so named for the way the concave spine curves up and away from the handle to produce an elevated tip and oversized belly that's perfect for skinning, slicing and filleting. Being a meat hunter this is the type I favour and was my favourite of the four.

In this instance the compact size and ergonomics allows not only for long sweeping cuts, it also makes provision for the dexterous use of thumb and forefinger for more precise butchering work. It also has the all-important full tang which gives superior balance and durability. Like the Trapper, the handle is genuine bone with full-length texturing for both good looks and safe handling. The knife weighs only 106g and has a practical, business-like feel so was both inviting and satisfying to use. RRP \$301.

The verdict

I'm a fairly pragmatic person who looks for appealing form, suitability for purpose and value for money in all my hunting

accessories and in this respect can't fault the fit, finish or performance of any of the Old Timer knives I tested. Due to seasonal constraints I didn't use them in a full-blown hunting scenario, rather put them to use in a variety of outdoors and agricultural circumstances I deemed typical of their intended use.

Activities included cutting rope, opening fertilizer bags, trimming hose, stripping electrical wire, shaping leather, whittling, peeling fruit and prepping meat and veg for the camp oven and additionally in the case of the fixed blades, processing some venison I had to hand. In all instances the knives performed superbly, though ultimately the decision to acquire one will come down to your personal situation in three respects: What do you like in a knife, what's your intended usage and what are you prepared to pay?

So does made in the US appeal more than made in China? Are you wedded to a particular steel and specific type of point? Do you



Fixed-blades with drop and trailing points.

have a specialist or more general purpose in mind for the knife and which price point suits you? Personally, I was more than satisfied with these Old Timer knives and, most tellingly, so were my hunting companions, some of whom I enlisted to help pass judgment. None of them had a bad word to say and interestingly without prompting, all were unerringly and intuitively able to identify the US-made Generational line as pick of the litter.

So I'll let one of them have the last say by way of recommendation and I quote: "Once you have these knives in your hands you're just confident they ooze quality." Enough said! More at aussieoutbacksupplies.com ●

AUSSIE OUTBACK SUPPLIES

OLD TIMER KNIVES REVIEWED ON PAGE 58

GENERATIONAL SERIES MADE IN U.S.A.



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YU152OTG



3-Blade Middleman
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YU34OTG



**Drop Point Hunter
W/Leather Sheath**
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YU169OTH



3-Blade Middleman
\$117
YU34OTH



1-Blade Bruin
\$232
YU5OTG



2-Blade Trapper
\$232
YU94OTG



1-Blade Bruin
\$89
YU5OTH



2-Blade Trapper
\$117
YU94OTH



**Blade Sharpener
W/Flip-Over**
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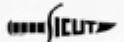
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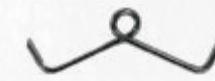
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Worth the **Weight**

Canik steel-frame Rival already
looks a winner, says **Rod Pascoe**



Turkish manufacturer Canik has been a major player in the aerospace industry for some time with a reputation for precision engineering and, in 2009, the company spread its wings and added firearms to its portfolio with early models catering mainly to military, home and personal protection applications.

Inspired by developing trends in the industry and market success of the Glock with its polymer frame, striker-fired mechanism and multiple inbuilt safeties, Canik expanded its product line-up, offering more options especially to one of the largest segments of the firearms industry, the concealed-carry market in the US. Then in 2020 Canik introduced the polymer-framed Rival catering to the sporting handgun market producing a pistol with a full-sized frame, adjustable sights, loads of accessories and one which conformed to the rulebooks of most action/practical forms of target shooting.

The Rival is just one in a range of handguns in Canik's catalogue but is the one with the 'look' of a competition pistol and took the prestigious Handgun of the Year title in 2022. Released at SHOT Show that year, the new SFx Rival-S builds on the polymer-framed version and retains all proven design features while adding weight. Outdoor Sporting Agencies (OSA) is Australian distributor for Canik and gave *Australian Shooter* the chance to put the Rival-S Black through its paces.

What's in the box?

The pelican-style range case is a great improvement on the earlier version but contains much the same equipment and accessories as its predecessor, though in a spacious two-layered arrangement including all the goodies a new shooter needs to get started.

Opening the case reveals the foam-lined tray which includes the pistol itself, two extra magazines, two extra grip sizes for a choice of small, medium or large, a competition-style mag well and the



The distinctive Chrome version.

'baby Canik' tool. An accessory kit contains other bits and pieces such as spare yellow and red optic fibres for the front sight, a medium and large magazine release button and an assortment of screws, washers and Torx bits that fit into the 'muzzle' of the little pistol which itself acts as a hex wrench.

Finally there's a bar which screws into the side of the reflex sight adaptor plates to become a cocking lever, giving the shooter something other than the sight itself with which to rack the slide - neat! Each accessory item has its own spot and in the lower section is a nylon cleaning brush and rod, magazine loading tool and array of optical sight adaptor plates to accommodate a variety of reflex dot sights.

An item not generally included with pistols is a punch to allow disassembly of parts with ease, Canik's way of letting the owner fix or make changes which might otherwise require a gunsmith. To complete the accessories is a black plastic holster with basket weave texture. The competition-style holster conforms to IPSC Production specifications and is good enough for the beginner before graduating to a full professional rig. In the lid of the case is an owner's manual and disassembly instructions.

First impressions

At 1.2kg the obvious difference to the polymer-framed Rival is the feel when you pick it up, the full-sized steel-forged frame providing extra weight which makes for a well-balanced and stable pistol. Physically the gun appears identical (apart from the grip inserts) to the polymer-framed version I reviewed here in April 2022. Texture to the front of the grip has been updated to deep chequering into the steel frame, while the rear of the trigger guard is undercut and helps the hand sit higher on the grip.

Instead of replaceable backstraps the new model has three one-piece wraparound polymer grips incorporating both side panels and backstrap, with a sand paper-like texture to further increase grip. There's a four-slot Picatinny accessory rail under the frame which is becoming pretty much standard on many pistols.

With the Glock patents having expired, Canik borrowed design and engineering features from some well-established gun-makers and one of the earlier models, the TP9, takes its inspiration from the Walther P99 of the 1990s, while the Rival and Rival-S also carry features seen on the Walther Q5 polymer and steel-framed match pistols. The long-slide stop lever is

Worth the weight

one such borrowed design and is duplicated on the right side of the frame.

The square magazine release catch can be repositioned to the other side and the accessory tool box gives a choice of three magazine release button sizes. The magazine and slide releases feel accessible in the hand with the medium grip fitted, while forward of the take-down release is a new Rival feature, a slot for an optional thumb rest. The addition of a mag-well helps with faster reload and can be removed if the rulebook dictates for certain categories or divisions of competitions. With the mag-well removed the end of the butt incorporates a 'self mag-well' internally shaped to improve magazine loading.

Canik, along with dozens of manufacturers worldwide, have benefited from almost 40 years of improvement on the revolutionary Glock system and as such, trigger mechanisms have been top of their R&D list. I've tried all triggers across the range of Canik striker-fired pistols and all are a vast improvement on Glock's original. The diamond-cut surface of the 90-degree aluminium flat trigger helps prevent slippage and improved control, while the reduction in trigger weight with a short up-take and short reset felt pretty smooth when dry firing and, according to the advertising material, the firing mechanism is an improved version.

The take-down process for removing the slide is a little different to most striker-fired pistols and instructions for stripping are in the manual and must be observed to avoid damaging the firing mechanism. Deep, aggressive serrations extend around the front of the slide, with a long cut on top and short one on each side helping with weight distribution and appearance.

I prefer to rack pistol slides from in front of the ejection port, a habit that comes from not wanting to rub off the carbide sight-black. Along with the step in the slide just behind the front sight, these serrations give plenty of opportunity for a firm hold. Both the polymer and steel models sport an adjustable sight and shows designers of the Rivals have the sports shooter in mind and, in keeping with modern trends, they're optics-ready.

Once the rear sight is removed, one of five supplied adaptor plates accommodate most popular brands of reflex red-dot sights. One of the adaptor plates even incorporates a fixed sight, again something that may be required in a certain match. The rear of the slide exposes the back of the firing pin and, coloured red, alerts the shooter to when the striker is cocked.

The five-inch (127mm) barrel is fluted which, apart from its appearance, reduces the amount of contact between barrel and slide. The breech end of the barrel also has

serrations to match those on the front and rear of the slide, while the flat recoil spring is captive on a square steel guide rod.

OSA also provided the latest SIG/Sauer Romeo-1 Pro reflex sight for this review. The Romeo series are top of the reflex sight range with SIG's reputation for quality and reliability. With its strong and lightweight housing and 30mm moulded glass aspherical lens, Romeo 1 is described as a miniature dot sight though I found it large enough for most applications on several pistols.

Although the sight is supplied with a steel shroud, the screws weren't long enough to mount on the Rival's adaptor plate (easily fixed with longer screws). This optic has a 6 Minute of Angle (MOA) red dot with a 3 MOA also available. The reflex sight has 12 illumination settings and the supplied CR1632 battery with its 20,000 hours-plus life is easily replaced using a top-mounted screw cap. It comes with a handy key chain tool with screwdrivers for battery replacement and sight adjustment as well as a spare battery compartment. Before heading to the range I cleaned and lubricated the Rival as per instructions.

At the range

I chose factory-loaded ammunition across several brands in Winchester, PPU, Geco, Federal and Sellier & Bellot, some 115-grain others 124, some lead round-nose others jacketed either hollow point or FMJ. All functioned without fault in feeding, firing, extracting and ejecting at a high rate of fire and didn't miss a beat.

There was plenty of adjustment available in the rear sight to cover any windage or elevation variations of the different rounds. The dovetail-mounted red fibre front sight was bright and quick to locate, though I prefer the traditional Patridge-style in some situations and the dovetail allows for an easy fix with aftermarket accessories.

Gripping the Rival was comfortable and sat in the hand nicely. The weight and, importantly balance, made it easy to shoot full-house factory loads as both weight and balance aided its stability so it didn't jump around, making it easy to bring the gun back on target.

The Rival-S was supplied with the small extension button screwed to the mag release. I removed it to reveal the base button is chequered and easy to locate and operate. It's handy to remember that if a pistol is staged, loaded with left side down on a table at the start of an IPSC stage, a longer mag release could be bumped as you pick it up.

Accuracy was respectable with all ammo tested and comparable to other pistols of

Changing to reflex dot sight is straightforward.



the same design and firing mechanism, though the standout was Winchester Silvertip 124gr Jacketed Hollow-Point. With load development, shooters will quickly settle on one which suits them and the gun. I experimented with my own ammunition, downloaded to the point where it made power factor, yet still allowed the pistol to function normally without having to resort to a lighter set of recoil and striker springs. As expected and after much development these loads were an improvement on the factory offerings.

With my failing eyes, groups were marginally smaller with the Romeo-1 reflex sight as the 6 MOA dot sat neatly inside the X-ring of an Action Pistol target at 25m. The trigger was smooth with a short, crisp reset and although weighing almost 4lbs it didn't feel like it.

Range sessions weren't just about accuracy and ammo, as functionality of the pistol in real-life competition situations were important to assess. As such fast reloads were smooth, aided by the mag-well bevel even without the extended mag-well fitted. I tried all three grip sizes and, despite having medium-sized hands, settled on the large after firing several rounds.

While the medium grip felt good at home when it came to shooting, the large was my preference and I'd no problem reaching the controls. Although the holster is



Deep chequering to the front of the trigger, trigger guard and front strap.

competition friendly and complies with the rules, it did bind on a couple of occasions but I found by pulling the pistol directly up without any back or forth pressure, binding didn't occur.

Summary

I mentioned Canik's a new player in this industry, attempting to beat off competition in the ever-growing 9mm striker-fired

handgun market and they've come so far so quickly. Whenever I review such a firearm, I stress there's a limit to how much manufacturers can cut the cost of producing a gun without compromising function, reliability, accuracy, safety and integrity of their brand.

So to be competitive they have to value-add somehow, which makes it even more difficult for potential buyers to differentiate between brands and even models within a



Mag well and grip replacement using the Canik tool.

Worth the weight

brand. In the case of the Rival and Rival-S, Canik has value-added with all accessories and attachments mentioned and also have practical and cosmetic embellishments and improved performance to add to their overall appeal. Furthermore, they've added three magazines and an adjustable rear sight, indicating the Rival is definitely targeted at a specific market segment - sporting shooters. Canik designers read the rulebooks of various disciplines, with and without optics categories such as IPSC, to make sure the Rival met requirements of the match.

OSA stock a wide range of Canik accessories and spare parts and independent aftermarket suppliers have begun producing enhancements such as grips, sights, compensators, thumb rests, recoil spring guides and extended magazines to enhance the Rival-S and can turn other Canik models into competition guns. The SFx Rival-S will appeal to those after a functional, solid, striker-fired handgun that's affordable yet has all the attributes for competition shooting. It's ready to go right out the box. At time of writing I saw some shops advertising retail prices starting around \$2100 for the Black model and \$2200 for the Chrome. ●



What's in the box.



The miniature Canik with parts and tools.



Specifications

Canik SFx 'Rival-S' self-loading pistol

Calibre: 9x19mm, (9mm Luger)

Magazines: Three x 10-round

Barrel length: 127mm

Overall length: 205mm

Height: 145mm

Width: 36mm

Weight: 1.2kg including empty magazine

Operating system: Short recoil, locked breech, striker-fired

Safety system: Trigger safety lever, firing pin block

Mag release: Reversible and extendable (small, medium, large)

Distributor: OSA, Victoria.



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Daniel honed his dad's old butcher's knife with the Accusharp Knife and Tool Sharpener.

A cut above

Accusharp tools will give you the edge, says **Daniel O'Dea**

My dad was a butcher by trade, something he did in his youth before taking a different path. When I was growing up, unlike most homes today where in the kitchen you're likely to find not only a drawer full of knives but a knife block on the countertop as well, choices were more humble. In our household apart from a bread knife there were really only two sharp knives of any consequence - a boner and a carving knife, both retained from dad's butchery apprenticeship.

They saw plenty of use and dad making music with a sharpening steel was a good indicator the Sunday roast was about to hit the table. Occasionally the knives would become dull so the oil stone would come out and they'd be given a proper restoration to razor sharp, such was my introduction to knife-sharpening.

In the early 1970s the Wiltshire Staysharp knife had its self-sharpening scabbard. We ended up with one but I don't recall many households that didn't have one kicking around. In more recent times

the improved quality of steel combined with modern manufacturing and sharpening techniques made sharp knives more plentiful and less expensive, hence the packed kitchen drawer. It seems during this period the skill of knife-sharpening may have been lost to many, excluding perhaps avid hunters and outdoors people.

Of course things turn full circle and now, in a world where a 'celebrity' chef is a thing and cooking shows can top the TV ratings, there's a greater interest in good quality bladeware for both the kitchen and



Accusharp product selection for review.

outdoors. Understanding that, if you're going to invest in decent knifeware, maintaining your investment will also be important and Accusharp make that part easy.

A brand under Texas-based company Fortune Products, Accusharp claim to focus on one primary goal: "Making the most effective knife blade sharpeners in the world." Their efforts are aimed at creating products that'll provide the sharpest edge possible for your knives, tools and equipment with a range extending from kitchen to workshop to hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits. They've apparently won awards for effectiveness and likewise enjoy several celebrity endorsements.

Australian distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies provided *Australian Shooter* with four products to take a look at including the Accusharp Knife and Tool Sharpener, the Accusharp 4-in-1 Knife and Tool Sharpener, a more traditional Whetstone kit and their 5-Stone Precision Knife Sharpening Kit.

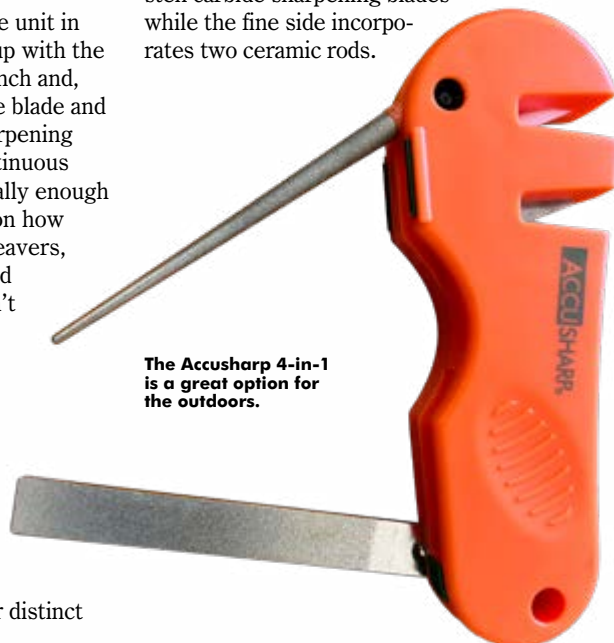
The Knife and Tool Sharpener is a cleverly designed handheld device, claimed to be the No.1 rated and best-reviewed sharpener on the market. It incorporates an ergonomically designed grip handle

with full-length finger guard for safety. At the tip of the unit is a V-notched sharpening slot containing two diamond-honed tungsten carbide sharpening blades, both reversible and replaceable to extend the life of the unit.

Operation is simple. Taking the unit in one hand, hold your knife blade up with the tip over the edge of a table or bench and, with the unit at 90 degrees to the blade and moderate pressure, drag the sharpening notch along the blade in one continuous motion. A few strokes are generally enough to sharpen the blade depending on how blunt it was. It can be used on cleavers, axes, machetes and even serrated knives, it's dishwasher safe, won't rust and comes with a lifetime warranty. For a '10-second' knife sharpener anyone can use, what more could you ask for?

Next up is the Accusharp 4-in-1 Knife and Tool Sharpener, marketed as 'the Outdoorsmen's best friend for sharpening and honing your blade'. This pocket-sized unit comes, not surprisingly, with four distinct

functions and is a completely different layout from the Knife and Tool Sharpener. In this case you have two V notches side-by-side on one edge of the unit marked course and fine, the course side again with tungsten carbide sharpening blades while the fine side incorporates two ceramic rods.



The Accusharp 4-in-1 is a great option for the outdoors.

A cut above

To operate, place the unit notches-up on a firm surface and this time drag your knife or tool blade through the notches, first course and then fine to achieve the desired outcome. A fold-out diamond tapered rod can be used for honing deep serrations or gut hooks and there's a groove for sharpening fishhooks or even darts. The fourth and final function is a retractable diamond file, providing a continuing flat sharpening surface for use in many applications.

Moving along and for the traditionalist is the Arkansas Whetstone kit. This includes two 3" (75mm) natural Whetstones, one medium, one fine, block-mounted and supplied with a 1oz bottle of honing solution (oil). Using a Whetstone is an acquired skill as the sharpening angle is not set and it's up to you to maintain both angle and continuity of pressure applied for both sides of the blade manually.

Generally you'll want to hold about 20-23 degrees of angle as you work each side of the blade across the stone. For me it's one of those things I either get right on the day or I don't, so it's a little hit and miss when looking for results. Of course practice makes perfect and if you master this method it's pretty rewarding.

Last but not least is the Accusharp 5-Stone Precision Knife Sharpening Kit. This would be a must for professional chefs and cooks and anyone else whose fanatical about their bladeware. It may come as a surprise to some but not all edges are honed to the same angle, as various premium knife manufactures have different opinions on that perfect angle. For example, Japanese firm Global Knives who produce high-end chef's knives sharpen between 10-15 degrees, where most Western manufactures favour 20 degrees.

Likewise the angle used can change depending on application. Sharpening at a lower angle presents a thinner edge, super-sharp perhaps but you wouldn't want to be hacking at bone with it. So with a chopper you might go with a higher angle for a thicker and more durable edge and with a filleting knife a lower angle for a thinner, sharper finish.

The 5-Stone Precision Knife Sharpening Kit allows you not only to select from an array of stones but lets you perfectly control the angle. The kit comes with five stones made up of three alumina-oxide in course, medium and fine, an extra-course diamond coated one and a fine ceramic stone for serrated blades. An angle-guide bracket provides for precision sharpening angles of 11, 15, 18, 21, 25 and 30 degrees while a C-clamp and pedestal holds the bracket firmly in place.



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A cut above

To use it, attach the pedestal to a table or bench using the C-clamp. The angle-guide comprises two mirrored parts between which the blade is positioned and clamped in place via two thumb screws. This slides down into a recess in the pedestal and the guide is reversible to be turned upside down to work one side of the blade or the other.

Each stone has provision to receive a threaded rod which is then inserted into a slot on the guide corresponding to the desired angle. The stone can be worked across the blade to be sharpened while the rod in the guide slot maintains the angle perfectly. It's a little finicky to set up but once done is both intuitive and easy to use. The pedestal also has screw holes should you wish to permanently mount it to a bench.

To try them all out I dedicated an afternoon to knife sharpening and rounded up a good selection of both hunting and kitchen knives. Paying homage to my late father, I even dug out his long thinning and retired butcher's knives and gave them a lick on the Accusharp equipment, proving there's truly something here for everyone.

The basic Accusharp Knife and Tool Sharpener is simple to use and a fast and effective way to restore an edge. The 4-in-1 is compact, feature-filled and perfect to throw into your daypack or glove box. The

Whetstone is great for those who want to go old school and master the art of sharpening freehand, while the 5-Stone Precision Knife Sharpening Kit makes it easy to achieve the perfect angle every time. This is just a small sample from an extensive range of Accusharp sharpeners, knives and multitools. More at accusharp.com. ●



All five stones are clearly marked and colour-coded.

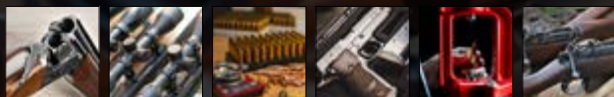
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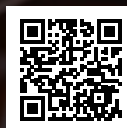
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Call of the wild



The bull making his way towards us, determined to know what the calf call was all about.

John Dunn shoots a buffalo without a rifle

In a saddle between two low hills, Rob Tritten brought the Polaris to a halt and killed the engine in the skinny shade of some spindly trees. A minor cloud of following dust swirled around us for a moment or two then cleared and dissipated in the slight breeze. It's impossible to say exactly how many buffaloes there were scattered through the scrub and timber on the flat below us. Around 30 or 40 and maybe a few more, mostly cows and calves and juveniles with some of them already turning and shifting around to look our way, not alarmed but clearly curious. All herd animals know there's safety in numbers and as we watched they began to coagulate into a united front, snorting and stamping and jostling each other as they jockeyed for position in the front line.

We looked them over carefully for a few minutes before Tritto broke the silence. "There ought to be a bull with a herd of cows and calves like this", he muttered. "But if there is I'm blown if I can see him. We'll move in a bit closer and you should be able to take some photos."

By the time we'd edged down the slope a little further the herd had grown and was slowly gravitating towards us, no more than collectively curious I'm sure but with buffalo you never can tell. At around 70 metres they stopped and in the sea of horns and swirling dust I thought I glimpsed a bigger set among and above the others.

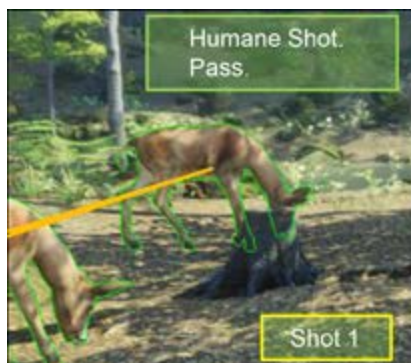
"Looks like there's a bull at the back of the mob," Tritto was saying. "He doesn't look very big but I'd still like to edge a bit closer. Have your camera ready and I'll call him to the front and be ready to grab the sissy bar if you have to - we may need to leave in a hurry."

If there's one thing sure to attract a buffalo's attention it's the dismal, bawling cry of a distressed calf and the one Rob gave was apparently very close to the mark. Almost immediately there was movement in the ranks of animals as a bull pushed and shoved and shouldered his way through the throng, his horns swinging, no longer bashful about presenting himself front and centre.

This was a nice bull but no trophy animal as his horns were a tad on the short side, reasonably wide, ridged and chipped and notched from fighting, though he lacked the necessary bulk to be considered the herd bull. For all of that you had to admire his pluck and courage and hard-wired need to know what the calf call was all about.

Clear of the other buffalo he weaved towards us still swinging his head, his eyes focussed along the length of his broad nose, clearly determined to satisfy his curiosity. I'd clicked the shutter three or four times and the bull was full frame when Tritto decided we should leave. He hit the throttle and the machine bounded away, leaving the herd in our wake.

When well clear we stopped and I looked back to see the animals presenting a united front again, a grey wall of buffaloes stirring up dust behind the bull who was out in front like a general leading his troops. Arnhem Land is a big place and we'd encounter more buffalo before the day was over. ●



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300 WSM	150	3260 fps
308 WINCHESTER	150	2820 fps
350 LEGEND	150	2325 fps
7MM-08 REMINGTON	140	2800 fps
7MM REMINGTON MAG.	140	3100 fps



Gun crime:

Increasing regulation will achieve nothing

Rachael Oxborrow

Three fatal 'vehicle-based attacks' in Melbourne's CBD in six years have prompted more than \$52 million of security upgrades, though it has been admitted there are limits to what else can be done on the ground to prevent this kind of behaviour. This comment came from former Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews following an incident on Bourke Street, where three pedestrians were stuck by a vehicle driven by someone who allegedly sped up in order to hit two cars.

Their actions resulted in the death of another driver and injuries to two others while in a separate incident, this time in 2017, a driver killed six people after deliberately slamming into pedestrians on Swanston and Bourke Streets. At no point has tightening controls on vehicle licensing eligibility been discussed.

However, if a death occurs involving a (usually illegal) firearm, the first measure called for as the antidote is to increase regulations, a move which ultimately affects only licensed law-abiding firearm owners. Yes these are two very different situations, yet when we're trying to pinpoint ways to improve public safety, it could be argued we need to remove the emotion and look to deterrence. A death involving a firearm or a vehicle in the

hands of someone intent on causing harm is not something we should accept.

So let's look at some numbers. Of roughly 25.69 million people in this country, around 19.4 million or 75 per cent of Australians have vehicle licenses. In 2022, the total number of registered vehicles in Australia was more than 20 million and there were 1194 road crash deaths in that 12-month period. Around 900,000 Australians hold a firearms licence (3.5 per cent of our total population), those 900,000 own about four million firearms and in 2019 there were 229 firearms-related deaths.

Now we know, thanks to Australian Institute of Criminology research, that in a majority of cases firearm homicides involve an illegal gun in the hands of a criminal. But we also have to unfortunately recognise that suicides involving firearms, both illegal and legal, remain a problem in our society, particularly in older males in regional areas.

An investigation into the issue by *The Guardian* in 2022 revealed firearms, poison and farm equipment contribute significantly to suicides in rural areas, yet these items are integral to the communities who use them as tools of trade. The data shows men in regional areas are at least 50 per cent more likely to commit suicide, however mental health issues

are no more prevalent in these areas than in cities, it's the lack of intervention and services which let the side down.

Numbers of firearms or vehicle-related deaths aside, the issue we have here is vehicles are a widely accepted part of how society operates while firearms are not. The fact that firearms used in a sport enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people on a daily basis is not factored into the equation, this despite our constant efforts to highlight the cultural, social and economic benefits of our sport to the country. The fact that firearms are used in essential pest control activities around the country is also being conveniently ignored. And there's blatant disregard for the role hunters play in reducing the \$25 billion impact on our economy, when the environment and industries reliant on the land are virtually under siege from expanding populations of deer, wild dogs, cats, rabbits, foxes and more.

Much of the commentary around legal firearm ownership by anti-gun groups relies on the premise that removal of civilian ownership privilege would immediately stop any new illegal firearms entering circulation, therefore significantly reduce crime and, by default, largely stamp out firearms-related deaths.

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VX-5HD 3-15x44 CDS ZL2 SF Duplex reticle Was \$2090..... **NOW \$1775**

Illuminated Firedot Duplex Was \$2280..... **NOW \$1940**

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VX-6HD 4-24x52 CDS ZL2 SF Firedot Duplex with Alumina flip up lens covers Was \$4175..... **NOW \$3550**

VX-6HD 7-42x56 CDS SF TMOA Plus Reticle Was \$4175..... **NOW \$3550**

Leupold Mark 5

Mark 5HD 2-10x30 35mm FFP TMR Reticle Was \$3895..... **NOW \$3315**

Mark 5HD 5-25x56 35mm FFP PR2-MOA Was \$4295..... **NOW \$3655**

TREMOR 3 or H59 Reticle Was \$4875..... **NOW \$4145**

Rangefinder Sale

Leupold RX-1400 TBR/W GEN 2 Rangefinder + Flightpath Was \$410..... **NOW \$349**

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Delta Point Red Dot Sale

Delta Point Micro Reflex Sight Glock 3MOA Dot Was \$780..... **NOW \$699**

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2 MONTH LAY-BY WITH A 20% DEPOSIT

Gun crime: Increasing regulation will achieve nothing

Yet we need only look to a recent study by Deakin University to refute this argument. Their research indicates illegal gun trade is closed to the general population without connections and even under conditions of significant regulation, access to illegal firearms can occur “relatively cheaply, easily and quickly” via a handful of individuals providing guns for criminal use.

“The extensive regulation of Australian firearms . . . means the world of gun buying and selling has been pushed further underground and is governed, more than ever, by the criminal code”, the study says. These researchers conclude that tough restrictions on firearm access increases the strength of these criminal networks and attention needs to be directed to “addressing the drivers or motivations for entry into gun-related crime, rather than more or better regulation of the firearm market”. They highlight policy issues of key importance being deterrence, deterrability and prevention.

The Sporting Shooters’ Association of Australia accepts there should be sensible regulation of civilian firearm ownership guided by evidence-based research, but stresses the urge to legislate and penalise the law-abiding will have little effect on firearm crime and ultimately firearm death. Our organisation and others in the community work extensively to ensure firearm owners understand their responsibilities around storage and use. Our elected representatives and authorities need to do their part to deter and disassemble the criminal networks in this country, who are propping up the illegal gun market and targeting law-abiding firearm owners as a potential supply option.

In similar vein, regulation of vehicles, licensing, training and deterrents such as fines exist and have been progressively tightening during the past few decades and more. In a perfect world there would be a corresponding reduction in road toll, road rage, drink and drug-driving and so on, but not dissimilar to firearms regulation as, beyond a certain point, regulation doesn’t always achieve the desired outcome.

This isn’t to say regulations shouldn’t exist, quite the reverse. Our elected leaders and regulators may have to look beyond punishment but what are their options? Daniel Andrews has acknowledged this very problem, the conundrum that protecting public safety isn’t an easy fix and regulations only affect those willing to follow the letter of the law. ●

Former Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews.



AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

FREE QUARTERLY TO SSAA MEMBERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER

A photograph of a woman in camouflage clothing and an orange cap, holding a rifle. She is standing in a field with trees in the background. The image is part of a promotional banner for the Australian Women's Shooter magazine.

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Clean as a whistle

Rod Pascoe

Birchwood Casey needs no introduction as a specialist in firearm cleaning and maintenance products and Tasco Sales Australia gave *Australian Shooter* the chance to review a compact cleaning kit especially for handguns that's sure to prove a hit with pistol shooters.

The kit is packaged in a clear plastic dust-proof tube that'll fit most range bags and holdalls and is labeled 'universal' which means it caters to a number of calibres. It contains a dual-axis rod handle, a stainless steel 11" (280mm) single rod section, brass patch puller, BC silicone gun and reel cloth along with 25 60mm square cleaning patches.

There's a high quality bronze brush in each of the following calibres: .22, .38, .41 and .45. The shorter than normal brushes are ideal for cleaning revolver barrels, where the brush clears the barrel completely when pushed in from the muzzle and allows the bronze bristles to change direction when pulling the brush back.

Birchwood Casey has chosen not to include any chemicals such as grease, oil or cleaning fluid as you might find in other kits

and I like this idea for two reasons. I can't tell you how many unopened tubes of grease and bottles of solvent I've collected over the years (mainly from cleaning kits) gathering dust on the shelf. Also, not including any of these products gives you the option to choose which brand and type of chemical, if any, you want to add to the tube - and there's plenty of room.

Another thing I particularly like is the dust-proof tube which keeps everything free of dirt and grit. Currently I'm putting brushes, patches and cloths in plastic bags and rods in lengths of electrical conduit, so overall this kit makes for a convenient and economical first purchase of handgun cleaning products which can be added to over time.

Being a universal kit, some brushes may seem redundant as not every pistol shooter needs a .45 calibre brush for example, though I can always find a use for such a brush when cleaning rifle chambers and pistol magazines, so nothing's wasted. ●



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The K800 is a well-made tripod with quality parts and components.

Steady as she goes

Nick Rositano road tests a pair of KJI tripods

With numerous makes of tripod on today's market I was excited to lay my hands on a couple of offerings from Bulgarian company KJI, in the shape of their K800 Carbon and K700 Aluminium for review. At first glance you can see the quality of components which are used from the aluminium through to the carbon fibre.

The K700 comes packaged with a KJI Reaper grip which features a rest that'll suit pretty much any rifle on the modern market, with an adjustable clamp which can be opened or closed to suit a variety of different-shaped stocks. This tripod has three-level leg extensions with locking levers, which allows the shooter to move from the crouching position to standing in a matter of seconds.

When attaching my rifle to the Reaper clamp the tripod feels secure and sturdy on uneven ground out in the field. Having used my fair share of cheaper tripods during the past couple of years, it's fair to say you only get what you pay for. What I really liked about the reaper clamp is you can use whatever firearm in it, from an air-rifle for beginners all the way up to big centrefire calibres, without the need for an Arca or Picatinny rail mounted on the underside of the stock.

Compared to the K800 the K700 weighs 2.51kg as opposed to 1.6kg, so if your main purpose is for hunting I'd recommend going down the path of the former for its weight-saving properties. The K800 can be adjusted to a top height of 162cm right down to a minimum of 50.2cm and can take a maximum of 9kg. The K700 tripod can be adjusted between 182cm and 27.3cm and

will support a top weight of 11kg, so will take way more than just a rifle.

Both tripods can be used for a wide range of purposes from competition shooting, sighting-in at the range, thermal and night hunting all the way through to backpack hunting. Having taken both to the range, I was able to sight-in a couple of rifles without using a bench and, to be honest, I found it more comfortable to shoot and in some instances more stable.

The KJI K800 tripod and Reaper Rail (Picatinny) kit is crafted out of lightweight carbon fibre composite and features a four-level leg extension with flip lock, the rail allowing a tilt range of 21 degrees up and 87 degrees down. The leg extension locking mechanisms on both units work exceptionally well and didn't fail once, unlike some other brands I've tried during the past few years.

Don't get me wrong, I like bipods but sometimes they can really limit your shooting capabilities when compared to

tripods, which not only give you more adjustment but also added stability from those three legs. And not only do both these units take firearms, they can also be used for optics, thermals and even cameras.

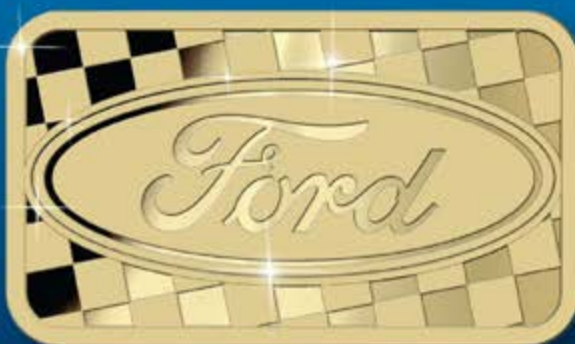
The KJI K800 Carbon tripod retails for \$1295 and the K700 Aluminium for around \$895. Both come standard with a carry-case to ensure ease of transport wherever you go and can be packed right down to a compact unit. I found both could easily be carried with the straps on the bottom of my 25-litre pack when I'm backpack hunting.

So gone are the days when you need to rely on a tree branch, boulder or whatever else you have to make do with to effect a one-shot kill on a target animal. To anyone in the market for a well-made and robust tripod, whether for competition shooting or hunting, I can highly recommend either of these KJI offerings. The review items were supplied by Hunt the Night of Pakenham, Victoria. ●



The K800 Carbon tripod with Picatinny rail is an excellent lightweight accessory.

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Field to Fork - Second Helpings

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SSAA Bush Kettle

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.

The kettle can be used with gas stoves and has a stainless construction.

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SSAA Camping Lantern

This lantern is lightweight and ultrabright, with 450 lumens. Simply pull the SSAA Pop Up Camping Lantern upwards to turn on and push closed to turn it off. When you want overhead light, use the metal 'arms' to easily hang it. Runs on three AA batteries.

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Snake Bite Kit

In the SSAA Snake Bite Kit are two snake bite indicator bandages and an easy to follow first-aid guide specific to snake bites. Along with other necessary bandages, the kit is compact and packaged in a durable, soft canvas bag that can be worn on a belt, making it easy to take it with you wherever you go.

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March 1-May 31, 2024
All SSAA clubs
Program: Small Bore, Field Pistol, Big Bore. Prizes: SSAA Merchandise Vouchers to the value of \$300 (one at \$100 and four at \$50). All entries go into a draw, first name drawn receives \$100, next four \$50 (only one voucher per person). Contact: Russell Mowles handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

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@ssaqlld.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 80 shots). 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

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@ssaqlld.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.

SA

SSAA (SA) Field Rifle and 3-Positional State Championships

March 9-10, 2024
SSAA Para, Greenwith, SA
Program: March 9: Field Rifle Rimfire, Field Rifle Centrefire. March 10: 3P SSAA Rimfire, 3P NRA Rimfire (60 shots). Prizes: Medals for all grades including U15 and U18. Facilities: Canteen at range, light meals, snacks, tea, coffee, drinks available all day. Accommodation: Motels within 15 minutes, caravan parks 20 minutes, camping on range with showers, toilets and power. Contact: Paul Rawlings paulee06@bigpond.net.au or 0403 436 905.

SSAA (SA) Air Rifle State Championships

September 7-8, 2024
SSAA Para, Greenwith, SA
Program: September 7: 10m Precision Air Rifle (40 shots), 10m 3P Air Rifle (60 shots). September 8: Field Target Air Rifle Open (30 shots), 10m 3P Air Rifle (60 shots). Prizes: Medals for all grades including U15 and U18. Facilities: Canteen, light meals, snacks, tea, coffee,

drinks available all day. Accommodation: Motels within 15 minutes, caravan parks 20 minutes. Camping on range with showers, toilets and power. Contact: Paul Rawlings paulee06@bigpond.net.au or 0403 436 905.

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) Handgun Metallic Silhouette State Championships

March 22-24, 2024
Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic
Program: Small Bore and Field Pistol. Contact: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

SSAA (Vic) Ultra 500 State Championships

May 7-9, 2024
Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic
Program: Unlimited, Unlimited Any Sight. Prizes: State Championship medals. Contact: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

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.

SSAA (Vic) Handgun Metallic Silhouette Big Bore State Championships

July 26-28, 2024
Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic
Program: Big Bore. Prizes: State Championships medals. Contact: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

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.

WA

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@inet.net.au or Dave 0400 205 892 or benchrest@jarrahdaleshooters.org.au

SSAA (WA) Lever Action State Championships

May 31-June 2, 2024
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Friday: Practice. Saturday and Sunday: 9.30 am start, practice from 7.45. Delegates meeting 5pm Saturday. Prizes: WA state medals and perpetual shields. Facilities: Camping at range with power and water, breakfast and lunch available to buy. Contact: Stephen Ellis 0418 388 991 or leveraction@ssaawa.org.au; Pete Corboy 0401 677 383 or president@plarc.com.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@inet.net.au

SSAA (WA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

October 26-27, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: October 26: Centrefire Silhouette, Centrefire Hunter. October 27: Air Rifle, Rimfire Silhouette, Rimfire Hunter (all 40 shots). Prizes: Medals in all grades, SSAA gift vouchers and other prizes. Facilities: Some camping, limited hot showers. Contact: Paul Dunn pauld1939@gmail.com or 0407 428 175.

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An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA Inc, SSAA State Office or club directive. SSAA Inc will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA Inc championship event for any reason. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

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Hunting: A virtue, not a vice

It costs a lot of money to get something for nothing. We invest plenty in hunting, shooting and fishing gear, vehicles and everything else so we can enjoy some freshly caught fish or make our own venison sausages. It's a whole of supply chain spend too. I just updated my New South Wales hunting licence, after which I bought a bigger chest freezer so I can properly store all the free stuff coming my way.

Whenever the spend came up in conversation, my throwaway response was 'everyone needs a vice' and while a bench vice is a handy piece of equipment, what I'm referring to is vice as opposed to virtue. The more I thought about it though, the more I came to realise it was time to throw away that throwaway line. While at times considerable, I've come to accept the spend as an output, something required to facilitate a higher outcome, that of hunting, shooting and fishing.

The idea of hunting as a higher purpose, maybe even a virtue, took an unexpected turn after a conversation with two very knowledgeable friends about halal, as I was interested to know how it applied to game meat. I suppose at the time, like most people, I thought halal was about meat processing, though what I learned from that conversation is something which runs much deeper than procedure. It seems halal is a philosophical approach with meat processing being near the end of a journey, not the journey itself.

Even more interestingly, hunting when performed properly is a way of acting and participating in something with a greater sense of virtue. A salient point in the conversation was whereas buying meat may expose us to the world of money, finance, profit and loss, hunting is more direct with just you, the animal and your integrity. I suppose from a position of faith the idea might be boiled down to 'someone's watching so your actions matter'. That concept is predominant within the Abrahamic faiths and possibly many more, though my knowledge on such things is admittedly limited.

Those few hours talking about faith and hunting really got me thinking and that led me to another question: For those who don't align with a structured faith, what then? As a secularist, who bears witness to your actions if no-one's watching? Is it just a matter of letting the bullet fly come what may? Luckily when considering such matters I always have Aldo Leopold to lean on.

Best known for his book *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold is considered by many as the father of modern, western wildlife ecology. Born in 1887, he was a writer, naturalist, scientist, ecologist, forester, conservationist, environmentalist and keen hunter. Much of his writing and teaching have influenced modern environmental ethics, while his concepts of ecocentric ethics regarding land, biodiversity and

ecology helped drive and guide the development of scientific wildlife management.

And while he died of a heart attack fighting a fire on a neighbour's farm in 1948, he's still a figure of note and influence with his work promoted by the Aldo Leopold Society. Yet like any great thinker he's also not without controversy. The rub for many modern conservationists is while Leopold developed ideas that would be adopted as part of the modern conservation movement, to their dismay he was also a lifelong hunter and fisher. Even worse, he regarded both activities as part of a true approach to conservation.

This invented quandary about Leopold is one of the reasons I like his work so much, as anyone who can have the Greenies tying themselves in knots is worth celebrating. Anyway, Leopold did have an answer to the question of what if no-one's watching: "A peculiar virtue in wildlife ethics is the hunter ordinarily has no gallery to applaud or disapprove of his conduct. Whatever his acts they're dictated by his own conscience, rather than by a mob of onlookers. It's difficult to exaggerate the importance of this fact."

There's always someone watching. That's you. Which brings us to a point of convergence between the otherwise divergent views of faith and secularism and that is of ethics and ethical hunting. You're obliged to hunt, shoot and pursue a life outdoors ethically, as if someone was watching.

You get to decide who, a witness without or within, though neither choice negates your responsibility to act with integrity, to be ethical and acknowledge that rather than a vice, your choice to immerse yourself in the natural world, to be part of the process and ultimately be a good hunter is a virtue. ●



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