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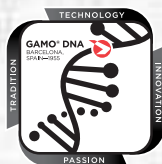
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When Ray Dennis wanted to shoot his new Barrett rifle in .50 BMG he was told he wouldn't be issued a Commissioner's Permit unless he had access to an approved firing range. "So I built my own," he told *Australian Shooter*. The end result is the Klondyke Range Complex on Klondyke Station, a vast sheep property in far western NSW with a series of five shooting ranges available to those with a need to wring out large calibre and long-range options and we were granted exclusive access.

Carrying out pest control in the dark using either thermal or night vision optics can certainly help boost your efficiency and the latest offering from Pulsar provides great flexibility at a reasonable price tag. The Pulsar DIGEX C50 is a digital day and night vision riflescope which gives you round-the-clock capability thanks to its different lens and sensor operating modes to generate great results at any time of day.

For its latest lever action rifle - the 1895 SBL - Marlin has taken a historic design and thrust it into the modern arena. Although not a new design to Marlin, gone is the sleek, non-existent pistol grip of yesteryear's lever, replaced with a modern and more vertical grip which reflects shotgun design, promoting responsive and accurate offhand targeting without affecting the function of a smooth lever-action. And combined with a 1.5-4x20 VX-Freedom scope by Leupold, the pair make for a formidable hunting combination.



Our November cover - see page 26



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The past few months have been peak agricultural show season around

Australia and at many of these events there have been SSAA state and territory members promoting our Association, our sport and our pastime. Whether they're signing up a new member or merely educating and leaving people with a positive experience of what we do, every interaction is valuable.

The man-hours put into making sure these displays are at each location and have representatives on deck are countless. Whether it's Yorke Peninsula Field Days in South Australia, Dowerin Field Days in WA or the local town show, our presence in the community is part of creating a positive association with who we are and what we do. Congratulations to those who've put in the hard work and make sure you share your efforts with us on social media via the SSAA Inc Facebook page.

Now the busy end of year period is almost upon us, the SSAA Online Shop is

primed to support your Christmas gift purchasing needs. The shop offers a wide array of items for camping, clothing, cooking and publications at great prices so a Christmas present for the shooter in your life is easy to find. Our international award-winning *Field to Fork - Second Helpings* cookbook is something the hunter in your life would treasure and enjoy. If you're missing the monthly Jumbunna column in *Australian Shooter* now John Dunn has retired, why not secure a copy of *The Jumbunna Collection Volume II: More stories from the bush?*

Taking your festive season drinks and food to celebrations is taken care of with the range of SSAA cooler bags and if your holiday season plans involve a camping trip, safety is paramount and the Snake Bite Kit should be an essential. Now with free shipping Australia-wide for members, visit the SSAA Online Shop via onlineshop.ssaa.org.au



A SSAA SA volunteer guides an interested visitor through using an air rifle at the Yorke Peninsula Field Days recently.



SSAA WA's mobile shooting range created many positive target shooting experiences to Perth Royal Show attendees in September.

Transferring history

I WAS READING Lionel Swift's 'Little Piece of History' article (*Shooter*, April 2023) and in the section on Alcock & Pierce I realised I have my own little piece of their history. I recently bought a Marlin Model 1893 in 30.30 (Serial No. 304744) with a 26" octagonal barrel and full-length magazine.

The interesting part is it has an Alcock & Pierce transfer on the left side of the buttstock. I've tried to date the rifle and info received suggests it was made around 1903-04. I just wanted to share this with others in the hope someone may be able to validate the age of this piece.

Jim Wickerson, Qld.



A step back in time

I WAS READING 'An Outdoor Life' by Mark van den Boogaart (*Shooter*, April 2023) and was transported back 60 years to when I was eight. Beautiful piece of writing and a reminder to practise listening to the primeval element within and outside ourselves. Here's to the days of lying in a paddock and simply being aware of every bird, flower and smell. Thank you, Mark.

Christopher J. Gallagher, via email

Food for thought

THANKS FOR A great magazine. The article on lead poisoning (*Shooter*, April 2023) was both well-written and thought-provoking. I've always been mindful of lead but this raised my awareness ever further, in particular for rimfire ranges with projectile 'catch' systems. The bullet is caught but only after being smashed, with lead particles and dust being released into the air.

I understand the need for catch systems on some ranges but, in my opinion, they create a potentially dangerous situation. Some drop projectiles into water though I feel we need to be more proactive and look at ways of making our sport safer. My initial thought would be to install a mist or spray water system in the catch, so dust will be dispersed immediately and lead particles greatly reduced.

David Wilson, via email



Greetings,

I HOPE YOU will help me correct two errors of fact in the article titled 'At Home on the Range' in the September edition of *Australian Shooter*.

In the article, I stated that when shooting Hornady 168g ELD-M projectiles in my .308W, 44g of the propellant AR2208 was a better performer than 39g AR 220H, with a photo provided as evidence. I was wrong. Both loads work very well and maybe the AR 2206H might be a little better if the gods are being kind. See the attached photo of two three-shot groups with AR2206H.

A second problem is in the next paragraph relating to loads for my 6.5 Creedmoor. The simple correction is that 39g of AR2209 performed much better than 41g of the same propellant, driving a 130g ELD-M. My mistake was that in my preparation I loaded 39g of AR2009 into the .308W cases. Secondly, I have no excuse, as I abandoned the 41g load several years ago.

Best wishes,

Robert D. Moore

PS. I think in many cases the Top Shots pages are far better than Google!

Insurance SSAA GENERAL INSURANCE BROKERS

Send questions to: insurance@ssaains.com.au



Introducing SSAA General Insurance Brokers Broker Assistant Laura Montgomery.

Laura has been with SSAA General Insurance Brokers (SSAAIB) for more than 12 months in her role as Broker Assistant.

She previously worked for SSAAIB several years ago in an admin role and has been excited to expand her skills and knowledge in the insurance industry through her current position.

On returning to SSAAIB, Laura was glad to fit back in with the SSAA family while

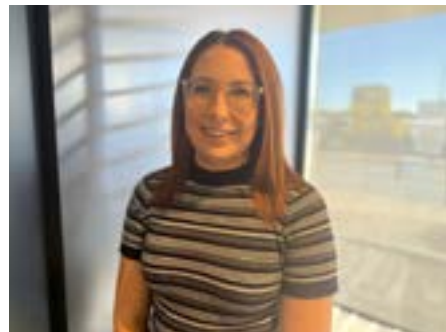
delving into processing claims and working more closely with SSAA state and territory members.

"I'm enjoying connecting with members and helping service their needs," she said.

"As the last 12 months have been a steep learning curve, my knowledge of the industry is increasing every day and with that, my excitement for the learning I have to come."

In addition to working across claim processing and assisting with general insurances, Laura also works with underwriters on behalf of SSAAIB clients during claims processing.

During the past few years, Laura and her husband have welcomed a child to their



family and the busyness that comes with having a new person in their lives. Jokingly, Laura remembers a time when she was an avid horse rider and claims she could happily take up the pastime once again if she had the time, a property and some horses in her care!



Where to for game management?

When I think about how hunted species in Australia are handled, it does worry me a little in terms of game management. With reviews into duck and quail hunting in South Australia and Victoria underway, I am not confident that we will see an outcome that paves the way for better management of these sustainable resources. At this point I feel that we are simply in a fight to hold on to the privilege to hunt ducks and quail, not improve things. If we get to retain our hunting privileges after these reviews, it will look a little different going forward. The good old days that many remember are gone, like it or not.

The hunting community also deals with constant political campaigns to reclassify the status of some game species, namely wild deer, and classify them as pest species. Many times, in conversations I have had on the topic, I would say that game status/management opens the door to managing both the target species and hunters. This management can apply in different ways to achieve certain management outcomes. This is a positive thing and just changing a name or status will not achieve much more than what game management can already provide.

For example, in the states where wild deer are under game management, we know how many are being harvested by hunters. In pest status states, we do not know how many are being harvested because there is no mechanism to report or record this. The rate or number of harvested animals is important to know when it comes to management. Increasing or

decreasing harvest numbers can certainly provide information useful for population management. This should pave the way for further exploration and/or make necessary adjustments to bags limits, seasonal conditions, and hunting access to achieve management objectives.

In the academic world, Australia is currently focused on pest management and species conservation. The in-between zone, where game management fits, is unfortunately currently lacking interest. At the end of the day, this could be just a funding thing where interest rests where the money flows for many researchers.

This lack of academic interest was evident when the organising committee for the 2023 Conservation through the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Conference had to make the hard decision to cancel the event. At the end of the abstract submission deadline, there were simply not enough submissions to create a worthwhile conference program. After the success of the 2016 conference, we thought we could go bigger and better next time, but this has not happened.

Was it that sustainable use and game management are not a topic of interest anymore or was the conference just another victim of the post COVID-19 world? When discussing the demise of the conference with the event organisers, it seems that this is a common theme. Abstract and registrations for certain industries have been down and slow since COVID-19. People are still not attending conferences like they did before. I have also heard that some employers have reduced the number of physical

attendees they now allow to conferences and want others to go virtual to minimise costs and potential exposure to COVID-19.

I hope this is just a cycle where interest will again pick up in managing species in different ways, not just as pest management (culling) or conservation (protection). It just feels a little deflating at times when there are developing countries that are managing wildlife through sustainable use successfully but many in Australia just cannot grasp the idea and run with it. Yes, it feels at times like we have our fingers in the leaks of a dam wall, holding back the onslaught from groups that oppose us and our lifestyle choices. It just seems we need to stand firm and then keep chipping away to make ground.

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The .32-20 Winchester cartridge.

Designed by John Moses Browning, a prolific firearms inventor, the .32-20 cartridge, also known as the .32 Winchester Centre Fire Cartridge (WCF), was introduced in 1882 for use in their Winchester Model 1873 lever-action rifle. Its low recoil and versatility made it suitable for those that were looking for a hunting or self-defence cartridge, which could be used in both rifles and pistols.

The designation '32-20' referred to its calibre and powder charge and, originally, the cartridge was factory loaded with 20 grains of black powder behind a 115-grain lead projectile with a diameter between .312 and .314 inches, giving it a muzzle velocity of about 1250 feet per second. In the early days shooters often reloaded their own cartridges and reloading tools were offered in the 1880s by the Ideal Manufacturing Company (now Lyman), Winchester, Marlin, Sharps and others. Some of these hand-held, tong-type tools included a built in bullet mould, so bullets could be made out of scrap lead, which was melted to use in the mould. Using this tool, the brass cartridge case could be de-capped, primed, (neck) sized, neck expanded, filled with black powder and then the bullet seated and crimped in the cartridge case. In the early frontier days, these tools were very practical, as they were lightweight, compact and could be easily carried in a saddle bag.

The cartridge was very effective in taking small animals such as rabbits and squirrels at ranges up to 100m, and its mild recoil and low muzzle noise made it popular with young or inexperienced hunters.

Many law enforcement officers also carried revolvers chambered in .32-20 due to its manageable recoil and effectiveness, especially in close-quarter situations.

Soon other manufacturers started making firearms for the cartridge and Colt first chambered their Single Action Army (SAA) for the cartridge, and later followed up chambering for their double-action Frontier, Army Special and then their Police Positive revolvers. Not to be outdone, Smith & Wesson then chambered their .32-20 WCF Hand Ejector First Model in the Winchester cartridge followed by Remington in the Model 25 and 25A rifles from 1923 to 1935, helping to keep the cartridge popular through the first quarter of the 20th century.

Nowadays the .32-20 cartridge can be reloaded using modern smokeless powder, which allows hunters to tailor their loads for larger game, and provided one places the shot properly, medium game can be taken humanely at moderate distances.

Currently there is also a rise in the use of the cartridge, as cowboy action shooting has become popular, and this has helped in the continued use, not only of the cartridge itself, but also the resurrection in popularity of Winchester and Marlin rifles chambered for the .32-20 cartridge.

Collecting these antique firearms chambered for the .32-20 cartridge has become more intense, as models in good working condition become much more difficult to find, and because of this, prices worldwide for Winchesters, Colts and Marlin firearms have increased greatly. Not only has the interest in the collection of firearms increased, but there is a big following in the

collection of the cartridges themselves, and original ammunition, brass cartridges cases and original packaging now creates interest from buyers whenever they are advertised for sale.

The .32-20 cartridge has had a chequered career that spans more than 100 years. It was a faithful servant to many early pioneers, law enforcement officers and hunters over many years, and although it may be outdated in performance today, it still enjoys a place in historical re-enactment, collecting of classic firearms and small-game hunting.

Please note: In the September issue, there was an error regarding the twist rate of barrels. The text should have read:

'The choice of twist rate is another important consideration, this referring to the distance a bullet must travel to complete one full revolution. It's usually expressed as a ratio such as 1:10 or 1:7, indicating that the bullet completes one rotation every 10 or seven inches in the barrel.'



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Q I often hear people say that shotgun shooting is 90 per cent mental and only 10 per cent technical. How true is that statement, in your opinion?

Lin Chu, Darwin, NT

A I have heard plenty of people over the years go as far as saying the sport is 99 per cent mental. In my opinion, that is a little over the top for the average shotgun shooter, but it could be very realistic at the higher end of the sport.

Of all the shooting disciplines, shotgun shooting is certainly the most instinctual, but that doesn't mean that just any shotgun and technique will get you to the top of the sport. If you don't have a grasp of the fundamentals and have equipment that shoots straight, then it won't matter how tough you are mentally; you just aren't going to get there.

I would suggest when you are starting out in the sport, the ratio for hitting targets even semi-consistently could be 10 per cent mental and 90 per cent technical. It is the same as the sport of golf, in my opinion. Anybody can randomly putt a ball in the hole every now and then from five metres away, but to do it 90 per cent of the time under pressure becomes practically impossible for a rank amateur more than 50 per cent of the time - just like shooting a perfect dead-centre bullseye on the pistol or rifle range. You will hit absolute perfection occasionally, but just because you did it once don't expect to do it all the time.

I find that many of the great shotgun shooters are just like this. They go through the right technical procedures like clockwork. The same stance, same mount, placing their head on the stock in exactly

the same position, they wait for the same amount of time before calling for the target to be released and eventually once they have seen the clay in the air they do exactly the same movement to the target time and time again. But here's the thing...there isn't one correct stance for everyone, there is not one particular way to mount the shotgun to your shoulder, no two people place their head on the stock in exactly the same manner and certainly there is not one identical place in the sky where you have to break the target no matter what discipline you are shooting. The single most important factor that you must accomplish is that you must do it your way identically every single time.

If you develop a routine mastering your technique and have the ultimate amount of faith and belief that you can break the target, then more than likely you probably will. If you have any doubt that what you are about to do may not result in a hit, then you have a big chance of missing. There is an age old saying in sport: Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are correct.

What this simple phrase is telling us is in the sport of shotgun shooting is that if you have the belief in yourself that you are about to break the next target thrown into the sky, then as long as you have a reasonable grasp of the fundamentals and your shotgun is actually shooting straight, then you have a huge chance at succeeding.

Getting back to your original question about what percentage of the sport is mental, it clearly depends what level you are talking about. The six finalists at any Olympic Games in any discipline are all accomplished shooters with techniques and equipment that has been tried and tested

for years. So, what separates them all? One word: belief. This one word accounts for most of the successes at this level. There is really no difference between any of the shotguns or ammunition and, even though all the athletes may technically look like they are doing things differently, pretty much all the basic technical fundamentals are being covered. It comes down to the person that really believes that during the next 50 minutes of an ultra-high pressure Olympic final that they are going to hit everything that is going to be thrown into the sky. And if they honestly believe that, if for some reason a miss occurs, it was merely an act of God and that unfortunate incident won't happen again any time soon, then generally, they are right. In this set of circumstances, the mental component of the game becomes way closer to 100 per cent than 90.

A famous footwear company years ago coined the logo 'Just do it'. I believe the marketing company executive who thought of this simple philosophy would have made a great clay target shooter.



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Q Reading Leon Wright's article 'Double take' (*Australian Shooter* July 2023) about shotgun gauge reducers got me wondering about how sub-gauge shotshells interact with a gun's choke. Since the shot is packed into a narrower diameter (at least at the chamber), I would naively guess that sub-gauge shells effectively experience less choke than a full-size shell fired from the same shotgun. For example, a 12-gauge shotgun (nominal bore 0.73") with a full choke (0.03" constriction) still has a larger muzzle diameter than a 20-gauge shotgun with a cylinder choke (0.615" at the muzzle), so I might expect a tighter pattern from the 20 gauge. While I've found some online sources that mention sub-gauge shells patterning differently from a regularly sized shell, I've not found anything quantitative. Do you have any sources or experience that might confirm or refute my thinking? As a practical example, could it be safe to use sub-gauge steel shot in a shotgun with tight fixed chokes, where the chokes are too tight for safe use with a full-sized steel shotshell?

James (via email)

A This is a very intelligent and technical question that is tricky to answer because of the ballistic imponderables you highlight. Sub-gauge tubes are quite popular both in short configuration as well as very sophisticated full-length tubes like those made by Briley in the USA. I think it would be fair to say that the patterns from short tubes will not be anywhere near as efficient as those from full-length tubes. The simple reason being that the full-length tubes are essentially smaller barrels inserted in the larger gauge and the gauge of shell fired in them (say 410, 20 or 28 gauge) is designed to be fired through those dimensions for maximum performance. Shells fired in short tubes in a 12-gauge, for example, have only the length of the tube to develop their best ballistic performance and when the wad and payload exit the tube in to the 12-gauge barrel, it essentially becomes very overbore

for the wad of the smaller cartridge. This means that the gas seal is very inferior to the same shell being fired in a barrel designed for that cartridge and wadding system. The shot will exit the barrel and be affected to the same degree as it would be if a 12-gauge shell was being used. A full choke is a full choke. The actual pattern may, however, be different in that the very inefficient gas seal will probably play havoc with the pellets and you may even see some welding of individual pellets to each other if you pattern the shells and compare your 12-gauge patterns versus your 410, 20 or 28-gauge patterns through short tubes. This is a fascinating scenario and only patterning will tell you exactly what your gun is doing with these various combinations.

Steel shot is vastly harder than lead shot and that is why most manufacturers say that half choke is the maximum you should shoot steel shot through and that you can expect full-choke patterns from this combination. I would strongly recommend you do not shoot steel shot in either a 12-gauge or a tubed 12-gauge (either short or full-length tubes) with any choke over half choke.

Good luck with your experimenting but be very careful of the use of steel shot outside the manufacturer's recommendations. Remember, safety is everything.

Paul Miller

A I have been reading about the new Alien 9mm pistol from Czechoslovakia and it's described as having a 'fixed' barrel. I'm pretty new to pistol shooting but I would have thought the 9mm ammo would be too powerful for such a system.

Noel, ACT

Q You're reading about some interesting pistol technology that's been around for a while but reinvented in the case of the Alien. In relatively low-power .22 rimfire self-loading target pistols, the barrels are *fixed* directly to the frame and the slide is free to move backwards and forwards

allowing the fired cartridge to push back against the bolt-face to recycle the action ready for re-firing. The recoil spring and mass of the slide is strong enough to hold the cartridge in the breech for that fraction of a second to give the bullet time to leave the barrel. This is called the *straight blow back* system and there are even some smaller, less powerful centrefire cartridges that work on this system: .25 ACP, .32 ACP and .380 ACP as used in small handguns like the Browning, Colt, Beretta pocket pistols and, not forgetting, James Bond's Walther PPK. But when more powerful ammunition such as the 9mm Luger round is used in a fixed barrel system, the mass of the slide and the strength of the spring by themselves would not hold the cartridge case in the chamber long enough for all the burning gasses to expand and for the bullet to travel down and exit the barrel. The Alien gets over this by using a *delayed blow back* system where some of the expanding gas is diverted through small hole just in front of the chamber into a piston on top of the barrel that puts extra force on the slide to delay its rearward movement up to the point where the bullet leaves the barrel and the pressure inside drops. If this action was not delayed, the cartridge case would leave the chamber along with a blast of hot gas before the bullet exits the barrel. This technology goes back to the 1970s in the case of the H&K model P7 and the Steyr GB and others. In these pistols, the much lower cost of production was the main incentive for producing fixed barrel handguns. The improved accuracy of the fixed barrel design is no doubt the motivation behind Alien's design.

Rod Pascoe

Q I have a family heirloom 12g bolt-action single shot firearm, the origin and age of which are unknown. The bolt cannot be inserted as you would a normal bolt and has to be undone at the front end of the bolt (cap), bolt inserted and then screw the cap back on.

We know the shotgun as a 'Thalet' and from what knowledge there is about the gun, possibly by a South African maker or Belgian, has a 30-inch barrel with full choke. It was fired once only many years ago using a modern 12g cartridge and then did not fire for a second shot and that's how its remained. Possibly it's a black powder firearm and maybe the modern cartridge burred the firing pin over due to pressure. It's not been fired for a very long time or even tried to be. Can you tell us anything about our old gun?

Brian Short

A Your gun is one of many that has been converted from an 1866 Chassepot rifle, of which some two million were made both in France and also under contract by Belgian, Italian and English gunmakers. Antoine Alphonse Chassepot (1833-1905) improved Johann Nicolaus Von Dreyse's needle fire design and this became the French service rifle between 1866-1874. Your gun was converted to 12-gauge by Joseph Tholet who was a gunsmith in Liege between



1886-1900. Originally chambered in 11mm needle fire, after 1874, many were converted to 11x59R centrefire. The proof marks on your gun are from Liege, and many were originally made in this Belgian town. There don't appear to be any French proof marks so these may have been removed when the gun was bored out to 12-gauge. It most likely has a shorter chamber than modern guns and it doesn't show any nitro proofing marks, so it shouldn't be fired with modern ammo. While an interesting piece of family history, this isn't an especially rare or valuable gun.

Geoff Smith



Q I purchased a book *Tanks and Fighting Vehicles* by Robert Jackson, and after reading it wonder why some tanks have smoothbore barrels rather than rifled ones?
Robert Meldrum, via email

A Robert, there are several reasons for this; firstly, smoothbore barrels are well suited for firing armour-piercing fin-stabilised sabot discarding rounds, which are designed to penetrate armored targets over long distances. They experience less wear than rifled barrels, which extends their lifespan and reduces maintenance requirements; they can fire a wide range of ammunition types including high-explosive, anti-tank and anti-personnel rounds, giving versatility in combat situations. Many NATO countries have adopted the 120mm smoothbore as a standard tank gun calibre, simplifying ammunition compatibility among allied forces.

Barry Wilmot

Q While discussing military planes with a friend, he said the Sabre plane had 'cannons'. I thought only pirate ships had cannons, is this true?

Robert Meldrum, via email

A Robert, for centuries the term 'cannon' has been used to describe large artillery pieces that fire projectiles. Historically, in the early days of military aviation, the fire-arms fitted to the aircraft were often adapted from existing ground-based artillery pieces and so to remain consistent with historical usage the term 'cannon' became entrenched in the lexicon of military aviation.

Barry Wilmot



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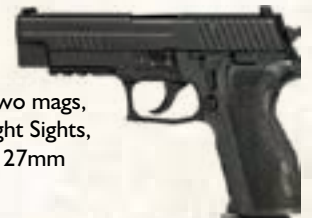
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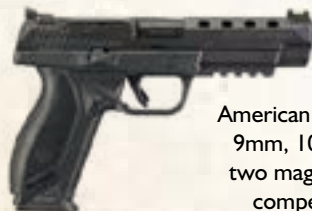


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The Savage 110 High Country,
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110 High Country package

Mark van den Boogaart

In the spirit of full disclosure, this is the first Savage rifle I have reviewed. In fact, I've only ever shot any kind of Savage rifle on a handful of occasions during the past 35 years.

No reason for my lack of experience, it just worked out that way. So, when *Australian Shooter* asked if I'd like to review the new Savage Model 110 High Country rifle, I said sure, send it over.

What I didn't know at the time was the rifle would arrive as a complete package. Literally a huge cardboard box. Inside was the rifle, scope, rings plus ammo all presented in a single gun, hard case. While it made testing the rifle all that much easier, I felt obligated to include it all in the review process, so stick with me as we cover off on a lot of gear.

Rifle

The thing about bolt-action rifles is that, as a species they are pretty much the same. It's the individual variations and generational improvements that make all the difference.

For instance, the High Country is the latest evolution of the Savage push-feed 110 design, which in one form or another has been around for about for 60 years.

Along the way Savage has built a reputation for accurate rifles, in part attributed to their own interpretation of a rifle bolt and action, and the highly regarded AccuTrigger system. If this is also your first time looking

over a Savage rifle, you will realise that accuracy, or Accu, is a common theme.

As received, the 110 High Country wore several stickers, one of which carried the tag line: Better comes standard. I liked that idea; it appealed to my way of thinking that standards should increase over time. Out of the box the Savage looks different - topped with the capable Bushnell elite 4500, the High Country displayed a high level of finish.

To complement the TrueTimber Strata finished synthetic stock, the spiral-fluted, stainless-steel barrel, bolt, receiver,

Savage 110 High Country

Calibre: 6.5 Creedmoor (as supplied)

Action: Push-feed bolt-action

Magazine: Detachable box (four-shot capacity)

Barrel: 559mm stainless spiral fluted

Finish: Brown Midnight Bronze

Rate of twist: One in 10

Stock: TrueTimber Strata synthetic

Trigger: Adjustable AccuTrigger

Weight: 3.67kg

Overall length: 1076mm





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Savage 110 High Country package

triggerguard and magazine plate are all finished in Midnight Brown Cerakote. Diving in, there are a number of key features to the Savage 110 High Country worth examining in more detail.

Accufit system

This is a user-based approach that gives you the ability to set your preferred comb height through five different-sized cheek-piece risers, and length of pull through, again supplied, four different-sized spacers.

In essence, Accufit allows you to customise the rifle to you, or anyone else who may be using it. It also enables you to modify the rifle to conditions. If you intend to hunt in winter with a heavy jacket, you can adjust to compensate for the extra bulk. Conversely, if you are hunting in the NT, again you can set up the rifle to suit.

Savage bolt

As a first-time user, the 110-bolt assembly was a quandary. It's complicated. In fact, I believe there are 22 separate parts that make up the bolt. The reasoning, so far as I have been able to investigate, is it's all about accuracy. Does it really improve accuracy? I don't know, as I haven't a fair comparison. However, if like me you are new to the particulars of the Savage bolt assembly, give it some of your focus.

Controls

The 110 High Country includes a tang-mounted, three-position safety and a bolt-release button just forward of the triggerguard. Again, a little different than I was used to, but neither a challenge nor hindrance to safe, effective operation.



Bushnell Elite scope and Savage 110 High Country action.

Detachable box mag

This takes advantage of a flush-mount, detachable box magazine. It's a four-shot mag, metal construction and easy to load and equally simple to insert and eject via the release mechanism incorporated into the magazine plate.

Savage AccuTrigger

A big part of the Savage approach is the AccuTrigger system. In itself, it is an interpretation of a two-stage trigger system. Instead of a single trigger that you firstly squeeze to an engaged position, before you

take up the final, tiny amount of slack to shoot, the Savage trigger has a separate blade that travels within the single trigger mechanism. When the blade and trigger are brought together, you are ready to fire. The AccuTrigger system, like the Accufit, is a user-friendly mechanism and can be adjusted to suit.

As with other components of the Savage 110 High Country, the AccuTrigger approach is very different and takes some getting used to. However, from the bench it felt great, and you can imagine it would be useful on a set shot while hunting.



Above: Bushnell Elite scope.

Bushnell Elite elevation and windage dial.

Bushnell Elite 4500 4-16x50

- Extended eye relief
- 30mm tube
- Waterproof construction
- Exclusive EXO barrier protection
- ¼ MOA windage and elevation adjustments
- Parallax adjustment
- Fast-focus eyepiece
- Simple, clean reticle

Scope

Supplied with the 110 High Country was a Bushnell Elite 4500 in 4-16x50mm magnification. The scope is part of the Bushnell 4X range, which includes a 1-4x24, a 2.5-10x40 and the 4-16.

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Savage 110 High Country package

interpretation of a hunting scope, which is one capable of stretching into the world of long-range hunting.

Like the 110, it is packed with a whole bunch of features including a 30mm tube, fully multi-coated lenses, a really clean, simple reticle, crisp and very positive ¼ MOA windage and elevation adjustments, plenty of eye relief and side parallax adjustment.

Both the capped elevation and windage dials and focus ring are easy to use and it seemed like a good match for the 110. Holding it all in place was a Leupold Picatinny rail and matching mounts.

Feature wise, the standout for me was the simple uncluttered reticle. I really like something that helps me focus on the target. Add to this the parallax adjuster and what you have is a scope with some longer-range hunting capabilities. Most surprising about the Bushnell was the price. I didn't realise this was very much an entry level scope. It is a great value for money scope option.

Leupold PRW2 rings/ Leupold Picatinny rail

Steel construction
30mm medium height (matte)
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Rings and mounts



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Mount

Leupold doesn't really need any introduction; it's a mainstay of the shooting and hunting world. I've owned countless Leupold scopes, usually held in place by Leupold rings. Even my old Scout rifle had Leupold versions of Ruger rings. Leupold make world-class optics, supported by a wonderful guarantee. I even once had to use it after damaging a scope and, yep, it was fixed free of charge.

As supplied, the Bushnell scope was secured by a pair of Leupold PRW2 30mm mid height rings in a matte finish. These rings were then attached to a complementary Leupold Picatinny rail. The PRW2 are steel construction rings and another example of Leupold's manufacturing quality. For me, scope mounts have one job, to hold the scope in place, and keep it there - and that's exactly what they did.

Case

I have a lot of Plano stuff - 99 per cent is fishing tackle related. It's good gear and does the job. The rifle arrived in the Plano Airglide, which uses a slightly different approach to most rifle cases.

Whereas you usually lay your rifle in the case, with the Airglide it is cradled in the upright position by high density foam and secured via two separate Velcro straps. Plano refers to this approach as a floating method of storage. As it is designed for scoped rifles, there is a bubble, or bulge, in the case creating a good air gap between the scope and the outer shell.

With three separate latching points and a couple of extra padlock points, you can secure it and according to the information page it is approved for airline travel.

With a big, easy grip handle on top, it's a nice design for transporting your rifle or shotgun.

At the range

It was time to take the 110 to the range. Supplied with the rifle were two different 6.5 Creedmoor loads by Federal Ammunition: one, a Varmint & Predator load incorporating a Hornady V-Max projectile in 95grain, the other a match-grade, 130-grain Berger projectile.

With so many variables to consider, when reviewing rifles, scopes and ammo, I've developed a pretty simple approach. I follow the instructions.

If the ammo says set the scope 1.6" high at 100 yards for a zero at 200 yards, I do it. Now, I naturally tend to shoot low, but by following the recommendations, I've found I flatten out the variables and gain a good idea of performance.

After a bit of plinking, it was time to go serious. I decided to use the 130-grain ammo as my base line and adjusted the scope as per the instructions on the box for a 200-yard zero. The measurements displayed are outer edge to outer edge. For true performance, you should subtract the projectile diameter from the outer edge to



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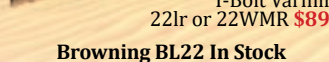
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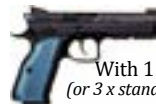
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PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Savage 110 High Country package

outer edge measurement. The reasoning behind my approach is so there isn't any potential confusion between the numbers quoted and the accompanying images.

The 130-grain match ammo produced a nice three-shot group of 22.48mm with an average height of 22.44mm. The 95-grain projectile produced a similar grouping at 23.22mm but at a whopping average height of 60.87mm. Yes, I know they should have been higher, but I was surprised by how much.

With a few more shots I decided to head out to 200 yards. Again, the results were impressive. For the 130-grain ammo my best group was 20.48mm, with little drop in elevation. The 95-grain projectiles produced a group of 35.13mm. I blame myself for that group, as I did drop one and it should have been much tighter. As you can see, it was also still way up on the elevation.

"Hey, Mark, it looks like you shot a lot better at 200 yards, than 100 yards. How does that happen?" Easy - I was starting to settle into the rifle. It would be great if I had a year's worth of use and ammo to really test the platform, but it just doesn't work that way, so I have to speed up the process a little. Consequently, I believe that with a few more boxes of ammo, combined with some more time behind the trigger and scope, the results would have been really impressive.

Final thoughts

Savage rifles have long enjoyed a well-earned reputation for producing accurate



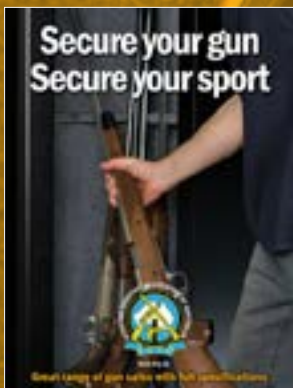
rifles and the High Country is no exception. It's a classy rifle, at a really affordable price point, and more importantly it's a straight and accurate shooter.

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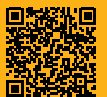
Prices

Savage 110 High Country 6.5 Creedmoor: \$2550
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Leupold PRW2 30MM Rings Medium Matte: \$180
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SIFA



The Talla Des

MAN-EATER

resurfaces

Diggory Hadoke

Born as a child of the Raj to Anglo-Irish stock of modest means, Jim Corbett had free reign over the forests of northern India, as he grew from a boy into a teenager, fully at home under the jungle canopy and intimately familiar with the ways of the beasts and birds lurking within the greenery.

At first a sport hunter, like his more conventional contemporaries, Corbett became less inclined to hunt for the sake of it and focussed on accepting the task of shooting man-eating tigers and leopards when others had failed. In doing so, and later recording his reminiscences in print, Corbett became the world's most celebrated hunter.

For his services he would take no fee, but insisted all other hunters vacate the area until he had succeeded in his quest. He walked great distances in arduous conditions, with few possessions and limited equipment, in his search of notorious man-eaters, many with hundreds of victims to their account.

Each time he did so, he took his life in his hands and carried the hopes and the future safety of countless villagers with him. In his hand, he often carried a Rigby rifle.

A Rigby rifle was presented to Corbett in 1907 as a token of appreciation from the authorities for his successful hunt of his first man-eater: the Champawat Tigress, a notorious man-eater thought to have killed 436 people before meeting her end.

The rifle was purchased from Manton & Co. in Calcutta; a company founded by a relative of the great Joseph Manton, who had apprenticed at James Purdey and Thomas Boss in the early 1800s. It became a successful store, selling the wares of most of Britain's gun and rifle makers.

Corbett's Rigby was a .275 (7x57) magazine rifle. Rigby records can trace it to the original order on 19 April 1905. Manton ordered '3 best Mauser Rigby sporting rifles, Nos. 2508, 2516 & 2517' at a cost of £39. 6s. 0d. It was part of an order which included

some second quality .275s and a .350 Mauser, as well as accessories and cases.

The .275 was bought from Manton on behalf of Sir J.P. Hewett, who had a silver oval engraved: *'Presented to Mr J.G. Corbett by Sir J.P. Hewett K.C.S.I Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces in recognition of his having killed a man-eating tigress at Champawat in 1907.'*

Corbett's Rigby was never destined to become a 'safe queen', it features in many of his thrilling stories of man-eater hunts. Among those tales is that of the Talla Des man-eating tigress and her two unfortunate cubs.

Like many man-eaters, the tigress carried an injury, which hampered the hunting of her usual prey, like chital and sambar deer.

She had a deep wound in her leg, caused by the penetration of porcupine quills, which are barbed and impossible to remove. She must have been in constant pain for the eight years she stalked humans, accounting for around 150 souls during her reign of terror.

For decades, nothing more was known about the Talla Des tigress than what Corbett had written in the 1940s. Then, in May 2023, Rigby received a message from a gentleman in Surrey, inside whose suburban home resided the skin of the tigress and within whose family history was some long-lost information about Jim Corbett and the fate of the Talla Des skin.

Before heading for leafy Surbiton, I re-read the story. It was on April 4, 1929 that Corbett set out for the Talla Des tigress. It took several days by train and on foot to reach the village of Talla Kote, from where he began his quest, accompanied by the son of a woman who had been eaten by the tigress, by the name of Dungar Singh.

Corbet soon found two tigers asleep in a clearing, over which he had a good view from his vantage point on a rock outcrop. He shot the first as they slept, being

unable to distinguish cub from mother at 120 yards. The second, upon hearing the shot ran up the hill and presented itself broadside, looking back at its sibling, before falling to a second shot from Corbett's .275.

Some 25 years later, he wrote: *'The cubs had died for the sins of their mother'*. They had proven easy, but the hunt had only just begun.

The shots flushed the tigress from where she had been resting nearby but she was 200 yards away and running. *'I have never seen an animal fall as convincingly dead as that tiger fell at my shot'*, wrote Corbett. However, events were to prove otherwise.

The dead tigress slipped down a slope until coming to rest on a sapling above a ravine. After a few minutes, she fell and Corbett fired at her body as she did so, out of pure exhilaration. It seemed not to matter at the time, but it left him short of ammunition he would later need.

Walking to retrieve the fallen beast, Corbett was alerted to a presence, slowly scaling a bank 400 yards distant, clearly lame, clearly hit, but still moving. His shot missed and his rifle was

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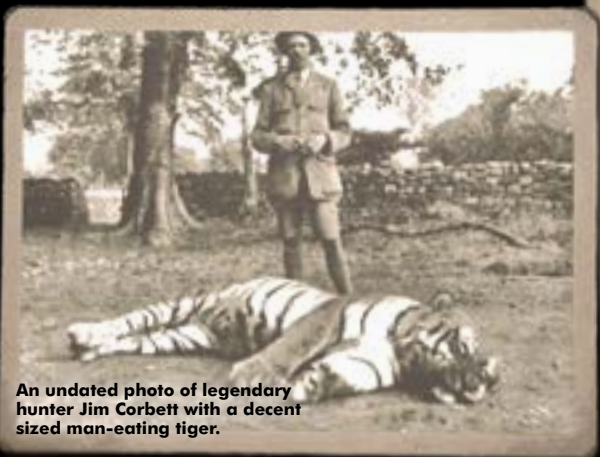
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The Talla Des man-eater resurfaces



An undated photo of legendary hunter Jim Corbett with a decent sized man-eating tiger.



150 people lost their lives to this man-eating tigress.



An undated photo of legendary hunter Jim Corbett.



empty. He could only watch as the tigress limped out of sight.

'Madho Singh came tearing down the hill with a fresh supply of ammunition' but it was too late. Corbett found cut hairs and a blood trail, *'But as night was now closing in and there was not sufficient light...I decided to return to the village...'*

After two more days of arduous and dangerous tracking of the wounded tigress, Corbett found her approaching him, as he rested with his back to a tree. She lay down 100 yards from Corbett's seat, but he could not get a clear shot and had to stalk her again when she moved on.

He continued to stalk the wounded man-eater - a terrifying prospect for a man in robust good health, but Corbett was suffering from an abscess in his inner ear, one so severe that he felt light-headed, and his left eye was swollen so much he could not see through it.

Add to this pain, the heat, the altitude, and the fatigue of tracking in mountains for hours on end without food and you get some idea of how tough and determined Corbett must have been to continue his pursuit.

Overcome with vertigo, Corbett climbed into an oak tree to rest, and it was then his abscess ruptured, venting through his left ear and nose. Corbett resumed his hunt feeling physically more able and less hindered by the infection.

A good night's sleep allowed him to recover further and the next day he got another shot at the tigress when she presented broadside at 60 yards. Corbett's shot was true, but the bullet passed through the animal without striking anything vital and she sprang forward and disappeared.

In his pursuit of the fleeing tigress, Corbett almost launched himself over a cliff to certain death, saved only by grasping a sapling as he fell. After scrambling back to safety, he checked his ammunition

- 'satisfied it was one of a fresh lot I had recently got from Manton in Calcutta' and with a clear blood trail to follow, set off again.

He found the tigress hiding, poised to spring at him, in waist-high bracken and managed to shoot before she launched her attack: *'My first bullet raked her from end to end and the second bullet broke her neck.'*

Corbett tells us that his first shot, fired on April 7, 1929, *'bushed'* on the tiger's shoulder joint, the second, fired as she fell over the cliff, missed, as did the third, taken at 400 yards as she crested the hill. On April 12, his fourth shot, at 60 yards, had *'gone clean through'* without hitting any vital organs and the fifth and sixth shots had been fatal.

So, the tigress was hit in the right shoulder, mid-body and then frontally, twice, in the neck: four bullet holes.

When we visited the owner to inspect the skin, which is somewhat faded but in better condition than one might expect of an 80-year-old relic that has spent part of its life in India, the bullet holes did indeed correspond with Corbett's account of his shots. The tigress is relatively small but well mounted, in a fierce, snarling pose by Van Ingen.

The owner explained that his great grandfather was born in 1875, in India, and was a civil administrator. He had returned to England in 1921 but he and Corbett, childhood friends, had remained in touch. It is likely that Corbett gave the skin to the owner's great grandfather in the early 1940s.

Looking at the tigress, alone in an upstairs room dedicated to her repose, she is recognisable as the same beast photographed back in May 1929. There is a close-up photograph of her with the grandchild of her last victim. The clear 'Y' shaped

stripes either side of her head are unmistakable.

We reunited the Rigby

.275 with the tigress for some photographs to record the occasion. They had last met on that fateful day, April 12, 1929, when her life was ended and the villagers of Talla Kote relieved of their terror.

Only one other skin of a Corbett tiger is known to still exist. That was from the Thak man-eater, which was given to the late Henry Walck of Oxford University Press in New York after Corbett's death.

I uncovered in a provincial auction in 2021 some lost letters from Jim Corbett to his friend Sir William Ibbotson. Among them were some photographs from several of his adventures, including images of the Talla Des tigress and her cubs.

Linking those old photographs and re-reading Corbett's incredible story of his hunt for the tigress and now contemplating her faded skin on the floor of a Home Counties bedroom somehow condensed the last century into a few places and objects. How our world has changed.

To learn more about John Rigby & Co., visit: johnrigbyandco.com



While slightly faded, the 80-year-old skin of the Talla Des man-eater is still in good shape.

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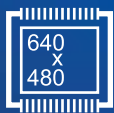
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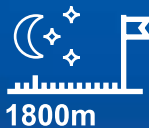
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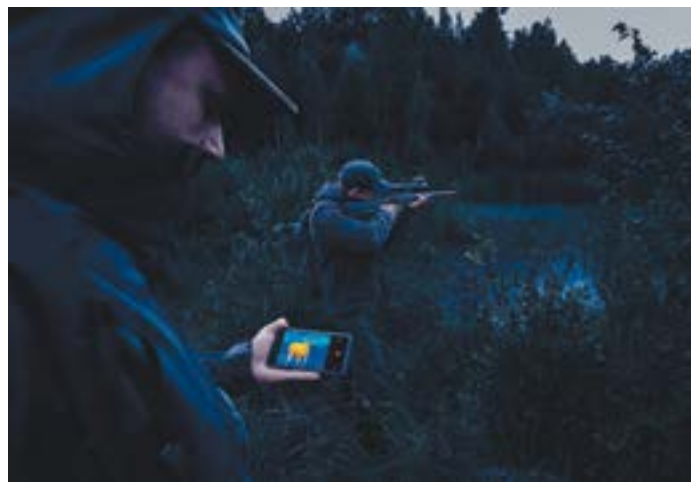
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This shooting life

Chas Harding

It was the New Year's Day shoot and I struggled to hear, "Chas Harding, Squad 7" announced over the speaker.

There's a fair crowd and I sit on the bench ready to enjoy the day. Two teenagers drift over and sit down. "G'day fellas. All good?" I say, in greeting. "No worries," one says, other bloke nods. There's silence for a while, then one says, "The old man said you've done a bit of shooting and hunting and don't mind a chat". "Yeah we're in Squad 8. Got any good stories?" the other bloke offers. I ponder and reply, "I'm fairly deaf but you ask the questions and I'll see how I go." Hesitation, then one says, "Righto, how did you get into shooting?" I smile, as the mind goes back 65 years to the five-year-old throwing stones at pinecones floating in the water. I still reckon that was the start of it all. I tell them this then move onto the air rifles with my brother at age nine and our 22s and shot guns at 12. The fact that Dad let us roam at will on the farms we had permission to shoot on, at that age, astounded them. But, we'd had responsibility and safety drummed into us since the arrival of the air rifles, hunted and shot with Dad most of the time and knew any



Firearm safety and responsibility was taught at an early age.

transgression from the strict rules would end in tears and confiscation.

"Do you still shoot with your family?" one asks. "Yes, my sons and my brother's grandson now also come with us. We've been going to the same property for 48 years." I tell them I'm a firm believer in family and tradition and the bonding that can go with shooting and hunting.

We watch as one of the good shots misses a hard right-hand bird. I feel a bit of a life's lesson won't go astray so I say, "You can't hit them all." I tell them about my many missed chances. The numerous 24/25s with the last bird missed as the 'inner man' rode my shoulder on that 25th shot. The rifle groups blown out with one errant shot. My poorest performance on the only buck chamois I've ever seen. "Misses happen," I



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This shooting life

said coming to the end. "Everyone does at some point. Enjoy what you are doing and imagine all the people who would love to be shooting but can't, even if they missed everything." Serious nods follow, as they realise what I've just implied. I throw in my standard, often repeated line of hope: "Don't forget though, even Bradman got a duck." They seem to like this one.

Silence again. Knowing young blokes love to shoot, I say, "I shoot every day - 40 rounds from my .22 rifle at metal silhouettes. It's fun. I walk the dog, shoot, then walk back home. Great practice, great for the dog's obedience and great exercise." I note the mention of the dog gets their attention.

Other bloke says, "How old is your dog and what's it like to hunt with one?" Ah, one of my favourite topics and I launch into it. "She is 13 years old now and our hunting together has always been fantastic. I can close my eyes and relive those years; the long difficult downwind water retrieves on ducks; the 'birdy' action of her tail as she casts on the scent of quail; the fantastic 'finds' of shot quail and pheasants buried in the tussocks and scrub; the multiple blind retrieves of game shot at night in knee-deep crops and the scent tracking of a well-hit deer through thick scrub."

I say, "Boys, make sure you get a Gundog sometime in your life. The absolute pleasure you will get from owning a pup, training him to obey commands, to retrieve and hunt and have always at your side as the most loyal and faithful companion is unbelievable."

They sense my voice has gone throaty with emotion and a quiet period ensues. Squad 1 is finished and they walk past us. 'Wild Harry' notices me talking to the young blokes and says to them, "Don't believe Chas - he's full of it," and roars with laughter. The boys laugh with him. Then one asks, "What do you like to hunt and what's your best trophy?" "Well," I say, "That's a tough one. I always reckon the real trophy is just knowing you've been there and done it, regardless of the outcome, together with the country you're in and the animals you see," I said. I describe the pristine snow-clad mountains of New Zealand; the vast red gibber plains of Outback South Australia; the Queensland channel country; the snow gum high country of Victoria; the lakes and rivers of Tasmania and the open tussocks of the Bass Strait Islands. All wonderful environments to roam around in, chasing game.

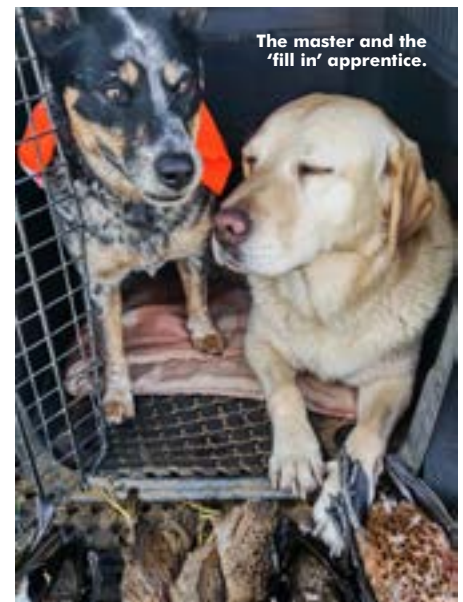
On the animal front I then tell of the excitement at the sight of a mob of ducks closing on the decoys jostling their positions, wings cupped, feet down and the



From pup...



...to trained gun dog.



The master and the 'fill in' apprentice.

noise of wind rushing through feathers. The sheer wonder of a big fallow stag jumped from his bed, his muscled haunches powering his escape, horns laid back, going for it. The adrenaline rush as a covey of quail burst from under your feet in tussock country, their eyes pinpoint sharp.

I tell them as far as 'on the wall' trophies are concerned, two stand out. The high gun sash won at a shotgun salute event for a great friend recently departed, together with my bull tahr skull from New Zealand's high country. Being young and fit and feeling bullet proof, they loved the sound of the latter mountain adventure.

The day's progressing and I manage to just hear "Squad 5 to layout 1." Other bloke then says, "I bet you've seen some nice guns in your time and some good shooting?" Knowing the boys were

operating within their parents' budgets, I thought another life lesson wouldn't hurt. "Yes, I've seen some nice Brownings and Berettas at these clay events and where I run the dog for the pheasant shoots, I've looked at some absolute works of art from the best English gunmakers. But, one of the best shotgun shots I've ever seen had a very plain Miroku Sporter with no bead and a split fore-end yet he cleaned everyone up at our big sporting clay challenge. Beautiful guns are great but they won't make you shoot any better. If the gun fits, you're on target," I said. The boys looked down at their own guns and I saw that they liked this sentiment. "And as far as great feats of shooting," I continue, "I've seen excellent high pheasant shooting, watched a bloke break 125 skeet with a sub-gauge shotgun,



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This shooting life

witnessed unbelievable group shooting and long range rifle work, seen 80 straight at Pistol Metallic Silhouette, witnessed fantastic snap shooting of duck and quail and observed two, 350m, one-shot kills on stationary deer.

However, the greatest shooting I have ever witnessed, knowing the difficulty of it, was to watch Robert Drew of Tasmania shoot running deer in the head at night, consistently, cleanly, confidently and often.”

While they pondered this, I looked around the ground and saw a couple of old fellows by themselves. I was pleased these teenagers had picked me out to come and chat about my shooting life and love of it. I knew I wouldn't have time to tell them about all the other aspects that had totally captured my interest for so long. I could have talked about the food that nature provided and its cooking; the great gunsmithing by absolute artisans of that trade; the vast array of shooting challenges and target types for

rifle, shotgun and pistol; the lovely metallic sounds of the actions of guns working repeatedly and reliably; the heady smells of gun oil and solvents and fresh gun smoke as an empty cartridge clears the gun; the pure aesthetics of blued steel and walnut perfectly assembled; the wonderful pastime of reloading and all its nuances; the camaraderie of family and friends around an outdoor fire.

I could have touched also on a couple of negatives: my dislike of the latest trend of the 'black tactical, pistol grip' look and the concept of extreme long-range game shooting.

I was still talking and didn't hear it properly when over the speaker comes "Squad 7 to layout 1".

Other bloke says, "That's you I think, Chas." They've twigged I can't hear very well. I stand up, put the earmuffs on and turn them on.

I thank the young blokes for listening to me, shake hands and wish them good luck. On the way I crack a smile as I hear, "Gees that deaf old bloke can talk," one says. "Yeah, if he can shoot as well as he chats, he should be a champion," the other bloke offers. They both laugh. If only they knew the amplifying power of modern earmuffs, I thought!

My first bird is an easy straight away. All good. The next is a hard righthander that surprises me a bit, the hand eye coordination is not there and I've lost it. Through these good earmuffs I hear in the background 'Wild Harry's' excited yell, "Even Bradman got a duck." I also hear two young blokes roar with laughter. I'm still laughing myself when I call for my next bird. Ah. This shooting life! ●



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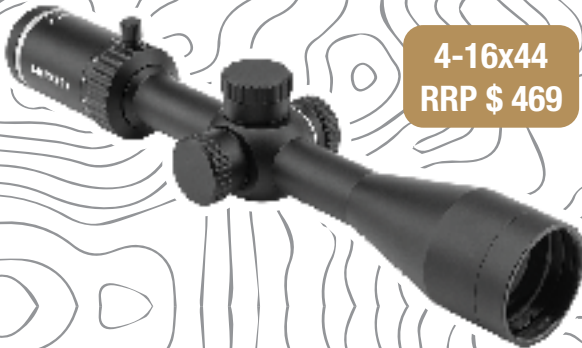
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The need for speed



The front end of the Speedtracker, with the parabolic adapter removed, showing the radar beam emitter.

Geoff Smith tests the Speedtracker Mach 4 Radar chronograph

Most shooters will have some interest in knowing the velocity at which their bullets are being sent off to the target. This enables an estimation of flight time to the target, which in turn gives an indication of likely bullet drop. This, of course, is critical for being able to hit the target in the right place, especially at longer ranges. Because gravity pulls bullets downwards as they leave the muzzle, we need to know by how much to set our sights over the line of the bore axis.

Measuring a string of consecutive velocities has the further advantage of gauging the consistency of the ammunition. Variability in consecutive velocities will greatly influence grouping capability. Without knowing bullet velocities, we will understand less about why our groups might be larger than expected or away from where we're aiming. Velocity is also a critical determinant in how much energy our bullets will carry to the target, since energy is proportional to the square of the bullet's velocity.

The rise of digital electronics has given us several ways of measuring bullet speed during the past few decades, with the most

recent (at least for domestic shooters) being the use of radar. The subject of this review is a very convenient portable device that accurately does this by emitting a 120-gigahertz beam of radio waves downrange, then analyses the echo coming back from the bullet's base to determine velocity. This measurement is then transmitted, using Bluetooth technology, to a smart phone or tablet on which an app has been installed.

The unit has been developed and produced by a team of engineers in Germany and Czechia (formerly Czech Republic). It was in what is now Czechia that Austrian physicist Christian Doppler (1803-1853) first came up with the mathematics explaining how the wavelengths of signals change when bounced back from moving objects, some 150 years ago. When a beam of radio waves travelling at the speed of light is bounced back from a receding object, it returns at the same speed, but now with a longer wavelength (much like the 'red shift' of receding stars) and this change is what enables the speed of the bullet to be determined.

Weighing in at just 226g, the cylindrical aluminium case is 101mm long and 40mm in diameter. The supplied unit is black

while a 'sand' coloured alternative is available. Supplied with the tracker is a conical shaped 'Parabolic Adapter' that slips on the front and helps focus a stronger signal back to the detector. This increases the overall length to 141mm and weight to 280g. The tracker needs to be located parallel to the barrel, no more than 150mm away, and no more than 600mm behind the muzzle. Some special requirements must be met when using muzzle brakes and firearms that emit large clouds of discharge gases, but this didn't arise in my tests with handguns and rifles. I did find a certain amount of experimenting is required to find the best means of mounting it, but once done it works very well. Similarly, a bit of learning is necessary to come to grips with the app.

For rifle applications the tracker is most conveniently attached directly to the rifle using Picatinny style mounts where available. Being powered by an internal battery, there are no cables to cause issues and the beam is emitted in precisely the same direction as the bullet, even as the barrel lifts during firing. With handguns it was initially necessary to hold the handgun alongside the tracker mounted on a small tripod and missed shots occurred a few times.

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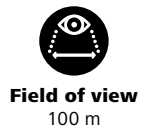
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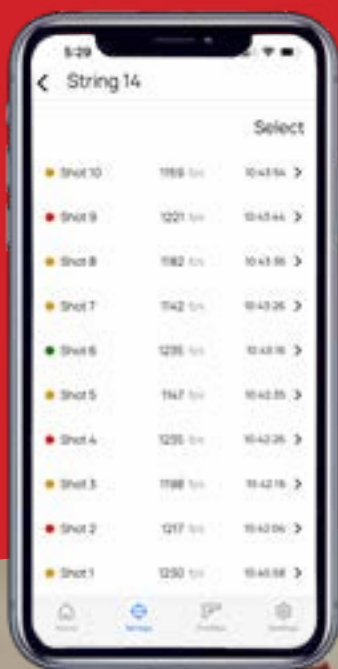


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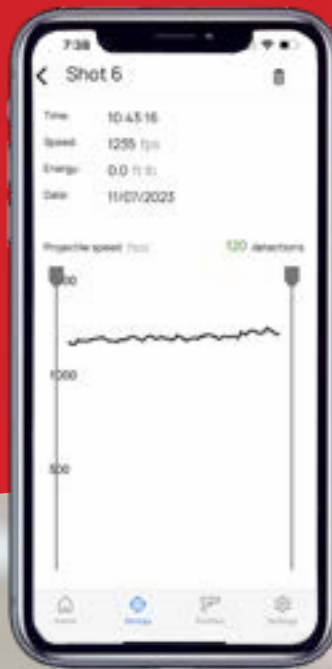


The need for speed

The string of 10 fired from the CZ with Power Point ammo – shots 2, 4 and 9 coded red, most coded amber and shot 6 coded green, meaning 120 readings were recorded internally in the radar unit.



The statistics screen from the 40 rounds fired from the .357 revolver – the test revealed way too much variation.



Shot 6 from string 14, the graph of measurements as the bullet left the muzzle.

The unit clamped to the barrel of the .222.



Anybody who has used the older style of photo electric chronograph, which uses 'sky screens' will immediately appreciate the ease of use of this unit. There is no careful alignment needed in setting up, or subsequent accidental shooting of screens, as the unit operates entirely behind the muzzle. You simply turn the unit on, open the app, then press the button on the tablet or phone display to connect the two and you can start shooting and recording shots. The app enables the results to be stored and they can also be exported as 'csv files' where required. (CSV files are 'comma separated value' files such as are used in spreadsheets like Microsoft Excel.)

So, having unpacked and charged the unit via its mini-USB cable, it is then necessary to download the app. This is available at no cost for either Apple or Android devices from the relevant app stores. Once installed

on the phone or tablet, having ensured blue tooth is enabled, the tracker is paired to the display unit. In my case, I used an iPhone and I had no problems installing and pairing the two devices. The tracker is turned on by pressing and holding the On/Off button for one second. The indicator is red when starting and when connected it changes to green, with the display showing 'Connected'. When a shot is fired, the indicator light changes momentarily to blue and the display then shows, and with my iPhone, audibly reads out, the recorded velocity. Each consecutive shot goes into the string, and the average and standard deviation is recorded, stored and displayed immediately. A few seconds is required between each shot.

Bullet velocities up to 1,200 metres per second (or 4,000fps) can be measured and stored in each string. The data from

each string remain stored on the phone or tablet and can be exported for use in other programs. For each string, a profile can be generated in which the details of the firearm, barrel length, calibre and load data are recorded. During set up you can request metric or imperial units. Once a profile has been generated, this can be saved and reused with further strings when using the same firearm and ammunition.

On the overview of each string, every shot that is recorded will have a velocity, time and a coloured dot to the left of the shot number. These may be green, orange or red. Green means you will have more than 100 detections, while orange means between 50-100, and red will be less than 50. One of the tests I performed used a CZ .22 rifle with Federal Premium Target ammunition. Of the eight shots that recorded, number eight was coded red, as it only made 13 measurements, while shot five was green and made 175 measurements. If you then go to the 'Statistics' screen, you can read off the string velocities as minimum, maximum, average and standard deviation.

I downloaded and printed the 17-page pdf 'Quick Reference Guide' from the website (speedtracker.tech/services) and found this to be very useful in making sense of the app and how to use the device itself. For my tests, I firstly used the little tripod that was included in the material sent for review, and while this was useful,



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Clamping the unit under the barrel of Geoff Smith's CZ 452 gave immediate success – every shot recorded.

I'm certain that muzzle lift led to several missed readings both from handguns and from larger rifles. I also attempted unsuccessfully to clock speeds from an air pistol. The best results were obtained by attaching a small Picatinny-style clamp to the barrel of several rifles some distance back from the muzzle. This gave immediate success on virtually every shot. I used a CZ 452 .22 rifle and a Sako Vixen L461 .222 rifle with a variety of different loads.

After this I decided to mount the tracker using the same clamp under the 300mm barrel of my Taurus Model 66 .357 magnum revolver and see how many shots recorded during a 40-shot silhouette match. The extra weight meant it was somewhat clumsy holding the gun in a two-handed, offhand grip, but the experiment worked. Every shot registered and as a bonus I confirmed a previous suspicion about the propellant I had been using. You get to

know when the velocity of shots vary, and so when a shot that feels soft is fired and the impact is unreasonably low or vice versa, you begin to think something is wrong. My test confirmed that a load of five grains of APS 450, which should have produced a velocity near 1000fps with Tigershark 158gr HP bullets, averaged 892fps, with a standard deviation of 45fps. The individual velocities varied from 968fps right down to 755fps, which explains a lot! This would account for about 13 inches of variation in the vertical plane at the 100m mark. Why this lot of powder should perform so poorly compared with earlier batches, I have no idea.

The Speedtracker Mach 4 chronograph is a very well-designed, convenient and easy-to-use device, requiring only a smart phone or tablet on which to record the data and for long-range rifle shooters it will be of particular use in setting up the rifles and developing loads.

The review unit was loaned by Speedtracker Australia whose website (speedtracker.com.au) gives a lot more information. The retail price for the tracker and the parabolic focusing attachment is \$1695, at the time of writing. For more information, please contact the suppliers directly. ●

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Gearing up for success

Derek Nugent

The contents in a game meat recovery pack.

The choice of what to carry when in the field is dictated by a wide variety of considerations. Among these are the duration and purpose of the hunt, terrain and fitness plus safety.

Naturally as with all hunting gear, personal preference and experience also factor in. While no-one wants to be caught wanting on a hunt, there is also little benefit in carrying gear which in all likelihood is simply along for the walk. My own experiences over the years have led me to develop a three-tiered hierarchy around not only what to tote, but also how to efficiently do so.

A few hours afoot

My preference is to take what I consider to be the essentials on my hunting belt easily checked and within convenient reach. Whether on an 'armed walk' checking trail cams or property infrastructure, maning a hide, exploring new hunting grounds or on a targeted pest eradication or trophy hunt I carry what I deem necessary for the few hours I intend to be out and about. Other hunters may elect to use a small day pack.

I take eight rounds of 'spare' ammunition in bespoke leather cartridge holders. My bum pack holds another seven rounds in its internal ammo carrier as well. So, depending on what firearm I am using this means that I could elect to have between

17 and 21 rounds available. Experience has shown me that this is more than enough for the hunting scenarios I would typically encounter over a few hours.

Next, I have to have a good quality, sharp sheath knife - absolutely essential kit. Mine is a German-made Boker which I purchased 30 years ago and which has never let me down. Although originally of German origin, Boker now manufacture across the world under four brands - Boker Solingen (Germany), Boker Arbolito (Argentina), Boker Plus (Asia, US) and Boker Magnum (Taiwan).

This listing is reflective of the relative quality and price point of each brand. I also carry a multi-tool, being mindful of the versatility inherent in their design. Mine has a small, built-in LED torch which is adequate for close-up illumination in lowlight situations.

My bum pack contains a comprehensive first-aid kit including the snake bandage. It is also able to accommodate car keys, a mobile phone or UHF handset, snacks and a head torch for use if unexpectedly still afield after dark. The head torch is a Tikka by Petzl and has both red and white light options, two brightness settings and a strobe function.

It also means that hands remain free for safe navigation of any obstacles

encountered. I carry an army issue canteen in a pouch, including the versatile metal 'cups canteen'. It not only helps to protect and insulate the plastic water bottle but allows me to brew up a hot drink/soup or easily replenish the container.

The canteen pouch incorporates an additional pocket that provides secure storage for: a compass, folding knife with built-in magnesium flint for emergency fire starting and a small light-emitting diode (LED) torch, a lighter, hand sanitiser, salt (for leech removal), a disposable CPR mask, latex gloves, a whistle and my Lansky knife sharpener. These items are light weight, easily stowed and provide the ability to react to most situations.

The last item of kit I routinely carry is a purpose designed belt axe. The most recent iteration is made by the Marbles Axe Company. It is only 32cm in length with a carbon steel head featuring a 16cm cutting edge and weighs 1.25kg. The company offers belt axes and traditional hatchets of varying design and size - mine is the smallest available. Their options include the enticing No. 9 Hunters Axe which features a versatile double bit blade. My understanding is that each cutting edge is ground to a different angle to satisfy a myriad of uses. The hatchet is a tool which comes into its own when breaking down a carcass

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or recovering a trophy. It also makes knocking up a bit of firewood an easy task.

Out for the day

So, while my hunting belt is always the first thing buckled on in preparation for an outing, if I intend to make a full day of it, I also reach for my day pack. It makes perfect sense that if the intention is to go further in pursuit of game, that more provisions are required.

In this situation the contents of the day pack complement those of the hunting belt. My day pack is part of a Black Wolf Grand Teton 75 combination, sourced second-hand from Cash Converters. This sees a 75-litre backpack paired to a 20-litre day pack. It is versatile in that if required the day pack can be zipped onto the backpack and carried as a single unit as opposed to two separate ones.

My day pack has two compartments, is light weight with well-padded straps and contributes little to no noise in the bush as the material does not scratch that much on foliage. It allows me to carry additional food, extra water, the obligatory roll of toilet paper and a raincoat. I favour stainless steel insulated flasks which not only help keep water cold but allow you to take a pre-cooked hot meal – soup, pasta or rice based.

Bringing home the venison

Regardless of the planned duration of a hunt, if the purpose is to harvest some venison, which is frequently the case in my context, then there is a requirement for a meat bag with which to transport the game meat back to camp.

This is where the Black Wolf 75 combo comes into its own. The main backpack serves as an efficient means of recovering venison regardless of whether it is paired with the day pack at the time or not. Its 75-litre capacity is spread across three compartments and includes an integrated hi-viz rain hood for waterproofing the entire pack. This is also a handy safety feature, for once deployed you become conspicuous in a typical bush setting.

As a specialised backpack the straps are well designed and heavily padded, including the substantial waist belt. This distributes weight evenly and makes portage as easy and ache free as possible.

I dedicate one compartment, which is kept scrupulously clean, to the tools required to field strip a carcass - a disposable plastic ground sheet, meat bags, gloves, hand sanitiser, an assortment of butchering/skinning knives and a light-weight hatchet. Having the additional axe and knives means that several of us – within the bounds of safe practice – can work on a carcass at once. This means that

the meat can be on ice as soon as possible and minimise the chance of any spoilage.

The other two compartments are reserved for the game meat, either boned out or intact depending on the circumstances - particularly the length and arduousness of the homeward trek. At this point I would stress the importance of having sharp, fit for purpose butchering knives to hand. I use Victorinox knives and a non-descript 'Colt' branded Skinner. It is a small knife whose ergonomics accommodate both thumb and forefinger to maximise efficiency and dexterity in the skinning process. I would never be without it.

Everything carried is light weight, durable and eminently fit for purpose. Ideally though when hunting as part of a group, the load could be spread across several willing backs.

Parting observations

My goal when in the field is to have on hand all the gear necessary to ensure a safe and productive outcome; be that culling ferals, sourcing a trophy or harvesting game meat. The point is to be self-sufficient in terms of the equipment required to facilitate a successful hunt of a predetermined duration and purpose, with a margin for unforeseen instances factored in as well.

Indeed, it would be just as frustrating to be unable to recover a trophy for want of a hatchet or game meat for lack of portering options, as it is unsettling to be caught in the bush after dark without a torch or life-threatening to be disorientated suffering from heat exhaustion for lack of adequate food and water. All very real yet avoidable scenarios, easily prevented with a little prior planning.

My choice of equipment is, as stated, a three-tiered hierarchy with each element hunting belt, day pack and meat bag working in concert to ensure that I have what I need readily to hand. On that point I freely admit that this is a reflection of my personal preferences, experiences and situation. I am sure that other hunters would carry a mix of gear pertaining to their own circumstances.

Some would endorse my choices, but others be dismissive - fair enough. However, the incontestable fact is that being suitably equipped in the field is not just about what boots to wear or which firearm to carry. It also encompasses the ancillary gear required to adequately support a dedicated hunt.

After all, we have to accept that prior planning prevents poor performance, enhances safety and augments our enjoyment of the great outdoors. ●



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Heavy going

Sam Garro outlines the benefits of an HB varmint rifle

For a time I contemplated shouldering my flat-shooting Sako A1 .222 Rem HB (heavy barrel) varmint rifle out on the plains of central-western NSW during the day, where the somewhat skittish rabbits were in numbers but kept their distance at often well beyond 100m. If I was to pursue them on foot in areas devoid of any natural rest such as a fallen log or tree and make head shots to retrieve the meat, I'd need a decent adjustable shooting rest which extended beyond the standard 6-8" to aim over low-lying shrubs and steady my shots.

For that task I chose the Atac Pro Trigger Tripod which extends from 65cm at its lowest to a maximum height of about 150cm and allows for quick adjustment and positioning. As a final thought, a lightweight tubular folding seat to provide even more stability was included and can easily be hitched to the backpack. Sure it's extra gear but it's a matter of what you're used to carrying and besides, it's worth the effort if it brings results, especially where game is scarce or skittish as in this case.

On previous trips rabbits were mostly shot standing at the vehicle with the aid of a door rest, as stepping outside sent them scurrying into nearby bushes. This time I'd be on foot with no vehicle noise to alert them from afar and, by using the sun and breeze to my advantage and scattered patches of cover to conceal my approach, I stood a chance of closing to within sniping range.

Why a heavy barrel?

Compared to a standard barrel a thicker or heavier one has less recoil and muzzle jump, vibrates less, takes longer to absorb friction heat from exiting bullets and can better tolerate metal stresses or flexing, all effectively enhancing accuracy. As the barrel takes longer to heat up it can therefore handle more rounds before it starts to affect the bullet's spiralling trajectory

The importance of sighting-in before hunting game.



A couple of rabbits taken in late evening.

and target accuracy. Hence why an experienced shooter looking to properly sight-in a rifle or trialling different brands of factory ammunition or handloads with varying weight projectiles, will initially shoot two to three rounds to determine a grouping, then wait for the barrel to cool sufficiently before repeating the process to determine the most suitable ammo.

Apart from long-range or competition target shooting, a specialised area where the highest level of accuracy is vital, heavy barrel rifles are particularly useful in harvesting copious amounts of game such as rabbits and foxes, as well as other invasive game or pests where the firearms are in constant use. In such scenarios, provided factory ammo or mild handloads are used and the firearm is properly maintained, a heavy barrel should also outperform or have greater life expectancy compared to a regular diameter barrel.

Improving accuracy

A heavy barrel rifle, or any rifle bought off the shelf for that matter, will need quality matching bases and rings, a

3-9x40 or similar powered variable scope and matching ammo that'll give the best grouping. When I bought the Sako A1 .222 Rem HB rifle, my initial sighting-in session using various factory ammunition printed reasonably on paper, some better than others at 100m.

Yet the accuracy and consistency I strived for still wasn't quite there. This improved once the action was bedded and barrel floated and matched with handloaded ammo using Hornady V-MAX BT 40gr projectiles in front of 22.1gr of AR2207 for sizzling velocity around 3500fps and flat trajectory, an inch high at 100m and smack on at 200m.

Weight consideration

Hunters generally tend to avoid heavy barrel rifles, particularly if it involves trekking long distances or traversing hilly terrain. A standard or light barrel rifle with a centre balance just forward of the action, compared to a heavy barrel with a weightier top end provides for quick and easy handling, so while a light barrel has its advantages, like everything else it's relative to the individual and its intended use.

Shouldering a bit of extra weight has never been an issue for me, as most of my outings involve taking added gear like a backpack for provisions, water bottle, digital camera and binos. These days, backpacks incorporating a rifle sling make carrying gear easier and better distributes the weight across your shoulders, while a small folding chair can also be hinged to it.

Calibre versatility

Often when rabbiting on outback stations other game like hares, feral cats, foxes, goats and pigs have been unexpectedly encountered. In each case, the .222 Rem with proper shot placement proved effective, though a heavier bullet of 50gr or more is recommended for the latter two.

Field success

Prepared for those wary rabbits I set out at first light with a backpack carrying a water bottle and snack bars, a couple of game bags and a box of handloaded Hornady 40gr V-Max bullets. The Sako .222 Rem was mounted with a Swarovski Z3 4-12x50 scope shouldered on my right and a tripod.

The red-orange glow in the eastern sky, inviting landscape and calming sense that came with it was exhilarating on its own as I walked quietly across the flat saltbush country. It wasn't long before those familiar pale forms were spotted on the edge of shrubs as they sat passively sunning themselves, though any clear visual approach within 100m sent them darting for cover or into their burrows. As the sun rose they appeared in numbers in the open yet still as skittish as ever.



A boar felled on another trip with a well-placed shot from the Sako A1 .222 Rem HB.



Paddock where rabbits appeared in numbers.



Alex uses the tripod to steady his shot on a distant rabbit.

The tripod proved invaluable as its quick adjustable height enabled me to take steady shots above some of the lower-lying scrub while remaining partly concealed behind taller bushes. I tried head shots for proper meat recovery which for the most part worked, though some unintentional shots hit a little low, completely destroying the upper half. The velocity of a 40gr projectile travelling at 3500fps just shatters those light-boned critters.

Target shooting on the range at set gaps is one thing but in open country scattered with brush, distances can be deceptive and game further away than anticipated. A rangefinder or scope with built-in estimator can make a difference for pin-point accuracy, though maybe it was also my unsteadiness at times when too eager or excited to send a shot away. On the other hand if you're just out to cull their numbers, a hit to the body has the desired effect.

Late evening shooting

In late afternoon as the temperature cooled, rabbits started to emerge from their burrows. Some sat for a while on

top of their mounds before hopping out a short distance to nibble on the green pick, while others in the distance sprinted across clearances to the safety of another bush. With so much game on offer and strong glare from the dropping sun in my favour, it was just a matter of remaining behind cover and picking them off.

Often at 100m or more, one or two rabbits would drop with those nearby looking confused, not knowing where the shot had come from. By now I'd bagged several as I made my way across the plain to meet the others before the light faded. My mates hadn't done too badly either, taking a few near the car. Driving back to camp in quickly fading light, rabbits were literally everywhere, darting from bushes and in front of the vehicle with more visible in our headlights.

The plan was to return the following evening and take enough to fill our freezers but Mother Nature had other ideas. By mid-afternoon the rain came pouring down for a good hour or more, completely drenching the ground and putting an end to any outing that night. We considered chancing it in our 4x4s but decided it wasn't worth the risk. And just as well we stayed put as the following morning the ground was sodden, forcing us to gingerly pick our way along the grassy sides of the main track to reach the main road. ●



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Aussie Outback Supplies

all you need for the great outdoors



Chances are if you own a swag or sleeping bag from Aussie Outback Supplies you'll never look anywhere else for your camping and outdoor products. In fact, it's not unusual for one of the original swags or bags made when the company launched 32 years ago to still be in use today. The Western Australian family business prides itself on being the best at what they do, all for the benefit of customers who know their purchase comes from a company committed to top quality and Aussie-based manufacturing.

Aussie Outback Supplies was founded by the dynamic husband and wife team of Darren and Adrienne Spencer, after they identified a gap in the Australian market for locally-made swags. At the time, Darren was involved in the family wholesale business distributing knives and outdoor products with his father Keith Spencer, who was

known for his hugely popular *Australian Shooter* column Edgemaster. During his work in this role distributing knife-ware and Tasco products, conversations with retailers planted the seed from which Darren's new venture was born.

Adrienne and Darren decided to take a chance and invested in a sewing machine, learned how to sew and began manufacturing. "Predominantly swags, bags and gun bags were our core business, then after about five years we gave up our jobs and expanded the project into a full-time manufacturing career," said Darren. "It was myself, my wife and three-year-old Brayden at the time and our family business became the start of a big adventure."

The Spencers have always lived an active, outdoor lifestyle and enjoy camping, marine pursuits and hunting and over the years have regularly gone on a variety of adventures. It would be during these trips

they'd find they needed something to assist them on their travels and inevitably would end up making it themselves.

"Most of our product ideas, apart from the initial swags we made, have been inspired by our own interests," added Darren. "We both grew up in the country and would go away sometimes for weeks at a time, living on boats or on the road and would design things to suit what we needed. Then I'd be showing people photos from our times away and they'd be asking: 'How come we can't buy that product'."

Those ideas have also expanded over time when enquiries for items such as metal detecting bags and archery bow bags would come in, or external outfits including the WA fire and emergency services would make contact to request a specific item, such as a waterproof map bag for employees in the field.

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Aussie Outback Supplies



AOS has been a family affair since the outset with Brayden lending a hand from a young age.



Aussie Outback Supplies started with husband and wife Darren and Adrienne learning to sew and make swags as a part-time venture. As the business grew, Darren and Adrienne expanded their equipment and premises.

venture the company has enjoyed steady growth, transforming itself from a novice in the industry to a trusted source for both casual outdoors people and seasoned campers. Throughout this evolution, Aussie Outback Supplies has remained unwavering in its commitment to producing high-quality, reliable products. Each one is meticulously designed and manufactured using leading-edge technology including

...we would design products that would suit what we needed. I'd be showing folks photos from our time away and they would be asking how come we can't buy that product?

Computer-Aided Modelling (CAD) and CNC cutting machines, ensuring exacting standards are met.

In recent years Darren and Adrienne's children Brayden and Therese have also joined the family business, bringing with them new skill-sets and enthusiasm to explore technological advances, website development and social media exposure. Darren had hoped that by bringing his children on board he might generate some free time for travel though this hasn't been the case. "We work incredibly well together and instead of consolidating and giving me some time for adventures, Brayden became way too motivated and created more work for us," he said.

AOS now has more than 200 high quality, reliable products in their range for the fishing, hunting, camping, mining, agricultural, 4WD and industrial categories. Among these products and brands is SICUT - (Spencer Innovated CUTlery) - originally designed by Darren and dad Keith. Established in 1994 and now trading in the third generation of the Spencer family, SICUT was created with the aim of supplying stain-free, high-carbon bladeware at affordable prices with an emphasis on function. Spencer prototypes are extensively field-tested before becoming SICUT production models and SICUT has since expanded to feature more than 100 products which they supply to a variety of different markets.

Another notable mention goes to the Ezesharp Blade Sharpener, designed in Western Australia and established in the 1980s for honing mulesing shears and commercial meat industry blades. Aussie Outback Supplies have distributed this product for more than 25 years and went on to buy the company in 2018. "We've been innovating the Ezesharp Blade Sharpener ever since, to offer the best value-for-money sharpening solution for



Aussie Outback Supplies range of AOS camping gear is second to none on quality and is known for being long lasting.

everyone from commercial to recreational users," said Darren. "The Ezesharp Blade Sharpener really is the most versatile knife-sharpening system on the market."

AOS are also authorised importers and distributors of a number of major brands including Ka-Bar, Dexter USA, Old Timer, Kershaw, Lansky and Nextorch. Brayden said maintaining Australian-made products and materials where possible was a core focus for the business into the future. "We've gone full circle in recent years through good and tight times, the pandemic and particularly when it has been hard to source materials for manufacturing," he said. "But we're continuing to develop new products and looking to expand our workforce to increase manufacturing capacity."

Aussie Outback Supplies take great pride in offering everything you might need on that next trip outdoors, whether you're travelling on land or water. Visit their website at www.aussieoutbacksupplies.com for more information. ●

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The RT-25 Trap gun is also available in a deluxe model with a fully engraved receiver in silver, quality walnut stock wood and a fully appointed leather case.

Performance and elegance combined with the **Victory Trap gun**

John McDougall

Last year I had the greatest of pleasure reviewing the Victory RT-25 Sporter from Turkey - a gun that impressed me beyond my expectations. This year I am pleased to say the Trap version of the Victory RT-25 is on the bench for review and outwardly I am very impressed with the workmanship of these latest offerings from Turkey manufacturers, who appear to be going from strength to strength with their high-end shotgun production. I was extremely fortunate to have several trap models to evaluate - the basics with silver and black receivers plus a high-end engraved item, the Deluxe. As mentioned, these guns are made faultlessly with sound engineering and premium materials, with the woodwork being exceptional for the price of the gun. But looks and elegance are not all that are desired in a trap gun; for high-end competition, they must be able to perform and from my evaluation of all three Trap guns there is certainly no question about that! Let's have a closer look on what is on offer.

The barrels

These were faultlessly completed in a hard-finished black chrome, far more resilient than traditional bluing to scratching and adverse weather conditions. At 76cm or 30" on the old scale with the basic black model that I enjoyed using so much and fitted with interchangeable choke tubes and a parallel

stepped rib the barrel set were designed for success! Fitted with a fluoro front sight and a white mid-rib beaded sight, the RT-25 Trap mounted perfectly once the comb piece had been correctly adjusted. Looking straight down the barrels and a little high, the Standard Black version was a dream to shoot as almost every target I shot at was turned to dust.

At the chamber end the gun was suited to 70mm/2 3/4" and was dedicated to trap with a non-selective trigger to always fire the bottom barrel first. I was not perturbed by the gun being dedicated for Trap, as this is really what is desired by high-end competition shooters - a gun solely dedicated to their sport, whether it be trap, trench, skeet or sporting. The barrels weighed in at 1.61kg and swung beautifully, making shooting the Victory RT-25 a rare delight. The stepped rib was perfect; in fact, all aspects of the barrel design, even down to the reduced perceived recoil, made the gun a treat to shoot. As one who hasn't shot Trap for many years, as my targets turned to puffs of soot, it certainly bestowed a great deal of confidence, not only in the set-up of the gun but additionally its inner barrel design and chokes.

The receiver

Design of the receiver was identical for each of the three models reviewed, except for the Deluxe which came with ornate

engraving and a fully fitted-out, all-leather carrying case. An excellent feature of these was the provision of a drop-out trigger mechanism should the trigger ever give a problem with a broken spring or firing pin, especially during competition. The spare set can be easily fitted to the receiver once the faulty part is removed by moving the safety catch forward to release the catch to the rear of the trigger set frame. The booklet supplied with the gun gave excellent instructions to accomplish this with minimal effort. Trigger releases on the RT-25 Trap guns were quite standard and very even at 1.3kg each barrel. A little light but very fast and positive, too, for attacking the target and getting onto it as soon as possible. These guns were all very well prepared and functioned to the highest standard that could be expected of them.

The triggerguard, being integral with the trigger set, was very generous and suited those who might choose to wear thin leather gloves. All tools required were supplied with the gun, along with spare firing pins and springs.

The stock and fore-end

Walnut in the stock and fore-end of each of the three Victory RT-25 Trap guns was exceptional and well above the quality found in other manufacturers' offerings of equivalent price. I especially liked the grain and character of the black



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Performance and elegance combined with the Victory Trap gun



A photo of the standard model Victory RT-25 in silver, the other option to the black chromed receiver.



Chequering on the pistol grips and fore-ends were well covering to afford a firm and comfortable grip.

Provided with five chokes, pouch case and a spanner, the patterns produced by these were amazing, as target after target was evenly destroyed.



An overall photo of the Victory RT-25 Trap in its black chromed finish and startling walnut stock wood.

standard model, which was quite unique. The colouring of the walnut was a little blanced but it matched up well with the black barrels and action.

All three Trap guns came with an adjustable comb piece for that little extra ability to fine tune the stock, and thereby the gun, to be as perfect a fit as possible. All tools were provided with the gun for this, too, and I must admit while shooting the black standard model, it fitted like a glove, as target after target was demolished. The other two guns were owned by other shooters so not wanting to alter the adjustable comb settings, the guns were fired as borrowed with devastating results on targets that I hit! In fact, I was more than impressed with both the patterns and perceived recoil of all three Victory RT-25 models, including the Sporter reviewed last year.

Although set up as a dedicated trap gun, I was impressed with the provision of a comfortable and significant recoil pad – not that 28-gram loads are hard hitting on the shoulder unless you are shooting hundreds of cartridges in a shoot-off or a large 'program' at a gun club with the potential to fire-off more than 250 cartridges. With the RT-25 Trap gun also being restricted to 70mm/2 3/4" competition Trap loads, or shorter, recoil should never be a huge concern also due to the weight of the gun at

4.28kg/9lb. 6oz - heavy enough to soak up recoil from the fastest of loads!

Over the Traps

In more than 40 years of testing shotguns, I can forthrightly say I have never experienced such enjoyment as I had while testing the black chrome standard model Victory RT-25. Much to my delight and even to my surprise, target after target was destroyed, with some targets deliberately left until they almost disappeared beyond the hill – these were guesstimated to be broken at around 60 metres. Yes, I believe the gun exceeded my capabilities on the day, as I had not shot Trap targets for some time!

I found the Victory RT-25 Trap guns to be exceptional and very well priced for what they had to offer. The standard model, in silver or black chrome, sells for around \$7,500, while the engraved Deluxe model with its fully appointed, lockable leather case sells for \$10,500. Both models are supported by a two-year warranty and supplied with all tools, a second trigger set and spare firing pins and springs. Value for money...I do not believe there is presently any better on the market with interchangeable drop-out triggers and such potential for shooters to improve their skills.

Editor's note: John reviewed the Victory R25 Sporting shotgun in the December 2022 edition of *Australian Shooter*. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Kizilkaya, Victory, Turkey

Model: Victory RT-25 Trap version Standard and Deluxe

Australian distributor: Hunt's Shooting Supplies, Cowra, NSW, 0428 453 425 or visit huntsshootingsupplies.com.au

Overall length: 1210mm /47 3/4"

Barrel length: 760mm /29 1/2"

Overall weight: 4.28kg /9lb. 6oz

Barrel weight: 1.61kg /3lb. 8oz

Bore size and diameter: Under 0.726"/18.4mm, Over 0.727"/18.46mm, 12-gauge and 70mm /2 3/4" chambered Forcing cones lengthened approximately 20mm

Chokes: 51 mm in length and fully internal Cylinder: 0.710", Imp. Cylinder: 0.705", Modified: 0.700", Imp. Modified: 0.695", Full: 0.697"

Trigger pulls: Under-1.3kg/2lb 12oz., Over-1.3kg/2lb 12oz

Stock dimensions: Length of pull 380mm, 15", Drop at comb: adjustable, Drop at heel: adjustable

Price: Standard model in either black chrome or silver, \$7,500, in a canvas-covered vinyl hardcase with all accessories including a spare set of triggers. The Deluxe model with a silver receiver and striking engraving, provided with a full leather hardcase and all accessories is \$10,500.

Warranty: 2 years

Aesthetically appealing hand engraving on the underside of the receiver of the Victory RT-25 Deluxe Trap gun.

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2/27 BATE CLOSE PAKENHAM VICTORIA 3810

Rest easy

Ridgeline can help tighten those groups, says Con Kapralos

This rest can be used for all manner of rimfire and centrefire rifles.

To truly assess a rifle's accuracy, shooting with a front and rear rest of some description is paramount. Benchrest shooters, many of whom are fanatical about accuracy, use the best when it comes to shooting rests and such equipment can cost thousands of dollars but is well worth it when chasing tiny groups.

For the majority of shooters and hunters, front and rear shooting rests can encompass a wide variety of kit from bipods, bags filled with pliable material to purpose-built front shooting rests with a heavy base and adjustable yoke to hold the fore-end of the rifle, though such front rests still require a rear rest for best results when shooting over a bench.

Enter Ridgeline's new Steady Shooting Rest, a one-piece affair which cradles the entire rifle front and back while being fully adjustable and made to absorb excessive recoil by using additional weight in the base. Ridgeline's load-up system claims a reduction in recoil of up to 95 per cent when the maximum weight is added.

Ridgeline sent one of its Steady Shooting Rests to *Australian Shooter* for review and it arrived disassembled in a large carton with

detailed description of the contents. The rest was easy to assemble and once done so measured 680mm long, 330mm wide, 300mm high and weighed 6.2kg without any added extras.

The unit consists of a one-piece frame of circular steel to which the base weight tray, rubber feet, front adjustable rest and rear rest support are attached. Starting from the base, the rest has two solid non-marking rubber feet attached to the front of the weight tray, while the rear is supported by a single adjustable rubber foot attached directly to the frame tubing. The rear height is easily adjusted by raising or lowering the rubber foot. The substantial weight tray is made of steel and solidly attached to the circular frame with two steel bolts and once secured won't move at all.

The weight tray is designed to be adjustable with a section which slides towards the rear of the rest with two tray lock screws on either side. The tray is made for use with barbell-style weights which are held in place neatly with the tray positioned fully forward. The tray has two rubber panels which also provide additional levels of

grip when weights are added. Two barbell weights of up to 11kg each (36cm in diameter by 6.5cm tall) can be easily accommodated and if more weight is required, the adjustable tray can be slid to the rear and a bag with up to 45kg of lead shot or sand added for maximum recoil reduction.

The front of the rifle is supported in a soft moulded rubber rest with height adjustment in the form of a vertical cam which consists of a steel shank to which a large star-shaped polymer wheel is threaded. The shank is positioned in the front of the steel frame tubing, guided by a recess which keeps the front rest at 90-degrees to the gun rest proper.

To adjust the height of the front rest simply raise or lower the polymer wheel and, with correct height set, the rest can be locked into position by tightening the lock key on the frame tubing. I found it beneficial to add a little lubricating grease to the threaded shank and guide groove which mates up with the steel recess guide.

The rear of the unit incorporates a moulded rest and recoil pad housed in a steel 'shoe' attached to the circular frame by two substantial bolts. The rear insert is



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Rest easy

made of pliable rubber which the buttstock rests in with a moulded channel in the base to position the stock centrally. A soft recoil pad is fixed to the back of the rest to help further tame recoil and appears to be removable so I assume would be easily replaced if needed.

At the range

The Ridgeline Steady Shooting Rest was put through its paces shooting several Howa M1500 rifles and checking their point of impact prior to being taken afield. The unit worked a treat but it should be noted that with the rubber feet, hard low-friction surfaces like concrete allow easier movement as opposed to carpet mats which made positioning the rest a bit tricky. Recoil of the test rifles didn't warrant use of additional weights, though several colleagues did express interest in using the rest for their 9.3x62 and 375 H&H rifles with lead shot weight bags as a minimum.

One minor drawback is the inability to adjust those two front feet for height, though I'm sure Ridgeline could address



Shooting a custom Howa M1500 Stainless with McMillan stock in 6.5 Creedmoor.

this in any future version. What should also be said is shooters must properly place themselves in respect to position of the Steady Shooting Rest on the bench and a seating stool with adjustable height makes this easy. Away from the range this piece of kit makes for a superb rifle maintenance

station, ideal for cleaning and carrying out tasks such as mounting scopes.

At time of writing the Ridgeline Steady Shooting Rest retails for \$299.95 and can be had from the online store or through any Ridgeline retailer Australia-wide. ●

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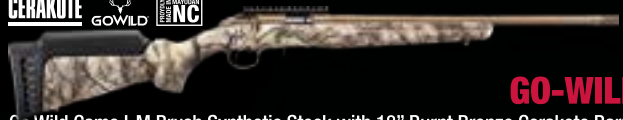
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Black Synthetic Stock with 18" Satin Blued Barrel



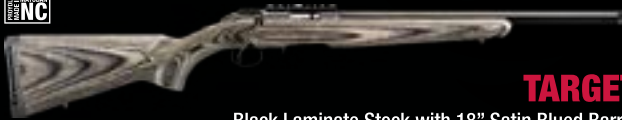
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Mike working on oil painting
Franklin to Flinders

Thanks for everything, Mike

Rachael Oxborrow
speaks to an unsung
SSAA legend

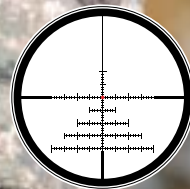
For close to 40 years, no single piece of publication and marketing material leaving the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has been output without the considered touch of our recently retired Art Director Mike Barr. He began with SSAA Inc in 1985 in sub-editing and production, before taking on the role of Art Director in the early 1990s. During that time Mike has overseen numerous technological changes, upgrades and expansions as the SSAA state and territory membership has grown from 50,000 to around 215,000 today.

The *Australian Shooters Journal*, now *Australian Shooter*, was produced in a shared office space in 1985 with agricultural newspaper *The Stock Journal* and as the magazine grew, the team moved to progressively larger accommodation over the years. The 1996 Port Arthur tragedy and subsequent changes to firearms legislation which followed was a significant moment in the Association's history.

"The world changed for many people after that and the Association membership doubled from 50,000 to 100,000 in a very short time," said Mike. "Every spare desk

space was shared by volunteers processing new subscriptions and our membership office expanded significantly."

Not long after this Tim Bannister was recruited as Managing Editor and later as Chief Executive Officer and, with his foresight, came a period of significant publications growth and expansion of professional staffing. Well-known and popular titles such as *Australian Hunter*, *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*, *SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to Target Shooting and Hunting in Australia*, *Australian Junior Shooter*, *Australian Women's*



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Thanks for everything, Mike



Holiday at Semaphore



The Delivery



Franklin to Flinders



Picnic Tree



Beach Shadows

Shooter, *Field to Fork* cookbooks and *Great Australian Outdoors* followed.

Mike was a key player in the development and design of these publications, some of which have been recognised with international awards of excellence. "I'm proud to have been part of a team which produces such high-quality publications and who've received various accolades for their work," he said.

In addition to working on the magazines themselves, Mike's role has involved sourcing printers, packing and mail distribution services. "Over the years we've forged good relationships with our current printers and distributors in Sydney," he said. "It's always an eye-opener for people when they see the scale of the printing operation required to get *Australian Shooter* out to members."

In the early 1990s Mike created the magazine layout, advertising and page allocation system which are still used today, though now in a more digital format. As he embarks on a well-earned retirement,

Mike leaves a legacy of highly-respected and award-winning publications in his wake. "One of the fondest memories I'll take from my time with the SSAA is the cooperative spirit that's been the hallmark of our Adelaide office," he said. "There's not much we haven't been able to do, the elusive *Great Australian Outdoors* magazine being a case in point, deemed at one stage to be beyond us yet now one of our most popular and successful publications."

Mike says he'll step aside in the knowledge the SSAA's stable of magazines is in good hands. In retirement he's now a full-time professional artist and says there's not much time for rest. He's a winner of more than 80 awards including 20 first prizes, a columnist with esteemed UK publication *The Artist* and was invited to do demonstration paintings at the South Australia Art Gallery during the prestigious Clarice Beckett exhibition in 2021. While ever humble to a fault, demand for Mike's work just continues to grow both in Australia and overseas. ●



Mike's oil-on-board painting of *Waymouth Street in Adelaide during a rain shower* won a UK art exhibition and later sold in the city of its setting.



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What to look for in

Thomas Tabor

The use of optics as a means of facilitating a higher degree of shooting accuracy has its roots centuries ago, but that technology didn't really seem to fully take shape until about the mid 1800s and even then, it was decades before a real quality magnifying optic was developed and effectively married to a rifle.

That long and arduous journey has now culminated into a diverse selection of top-notch scopes for shooters from which to select. But while in most instances more choices are generally viewed as a good thing, in this case selecting just the right scope to meet your individual needs can become overwhelming. So, let's dive into what characteristics would likely benefit you the most as a hunter.

Magnification

One of the first decisions most scope buyers struggle with is what magnification is best. Whether you decide to purchase a fixed power model or a variable powered scope, selecting the proper magnification is an important consideration.

A lower magnification scope will allow you to locate the target quicker and easier through its lens and you may notice less rifle movement through the scope. But those same low-powered scopes will

obviously make longer shots more difficult. And concurrently, a scope possessing too high of magnification can also become problematic when facing a close shot. Too much magnification at close range can make locating the target through the lens more challenging and precise shot placement could be difficult due to the body of the animal taking up too much of the view through the scope.

I will admit I am sometimes drawn to some of the new larger and more powerful scopes, but when choosing a hunting optic, too much of a good thing can become a real problem. Not only are the prices of these scopes usually hefty enough to cause you heart palpitations, their overall size and bulk simply makes them impractical for most hunting use.

Variable vs. fixed power scopes

For most purposes, where a hunter could encounter a potential shot as close as possibly 50m or out as far as even 300 or 400m, a variable magnification scope in the range of a 3-9x or even a 4-12x would make a great choice. In this case, a hunter would most likely keep the scope set on one of the lower magnifications in the event a quick, close shot should materialise, yet the power could be cranked up in an instant for a longer shot.

When it comes to fixed powered scopes, for many decades the 4x has been the most popular model but I personally would prefer just a bit more magnification. If available my first choice would a 6x scope, but even an 8x model would be acceptable in most hunting situations. Even at 50m most animals will not be magnified enough to significantly affect the precise placement of a shot and that little bit more magnification surely will work to your advantage when a longer-range shot is called for.

Reticles

Today there are far too many reticle designs for them to be properly detailed here, but most hunters find the various cross-hair styles a great choice. With some of these designs the thickness of the reticles will be consistent throughout the scope while others, frequently referred to as a 'duplex reticle', will have reticles with varying thicknesses. In this latter case, the reticle is generally finer as it approaches the centre and heavier around the parameter. This style of cross-hairs is great for the hunter because it tends to naturally draw the shooter's eye to the centre of the view while maintaining the peripheral vision around the edges.

Some of the non-duplex/standard cross-hair models possess cross-hairs that are



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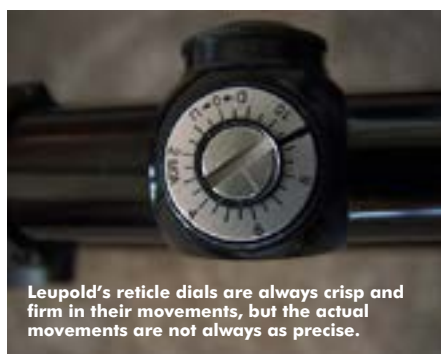
What to look for in a hunting scope



Trijicon makes some of the best shooting optics in the world, but, like so many other manufacturers, much of their work has been dedicated to large scopes best attuned to target and benchrest applications.



This Hawk Optics Nite-Eye scope comes with its parallax adjustment on the front bell.



Leupold's reticle dials are always crisp and firm in their movements, but the actual movements are not always as precise.



Field adjustable reticle turrets like this one have become common on many scopes.



An extension to this scope's magnification adjustments dial is a great feature, making a quick change of the setting easier.



One of Thomas's favourite hunting scopes has been in production for many years - the Leupold VX 3-9x40mm. This scope was a birthday present from his wife nearly 50 years ago and still functions perfectly.

fine, but these are not usually the best choice for hunting because under certain light or background conditions the reticle could be difficult to see. And if the reticle is heavy or thick, it may result in obscuring too much of the target area.

In recent years many of these cross-hair designs have been expanded to include hash marks or dots in order for the shooter to compensate for the bullet's trajectory. Sometimes these are referred to as BDC (Bullet Drop Compensation) reticles. I understand why some shooters may view this style of reticle favourably, but I personally prefer uncluttered cross-hairs lacking these secondary markings.

In this case, rather than having to rely on those markings to adjust for the bullet drop or the wind drift, I prefer to simply educate myself as to how the bullet performs under whatever conditions I will be facing. Knowing how much trajectory drop my bullet will have and how much influence the wind will have on its flight, then simply adjusting for those outside influences makes better sense to me. But that is just me personally.

Because I shoot many different calibre rifles and ammunition, all possessing various bullet trajectories, I sometimes tape a chart to the buttstock of my rifle's broke down 100 yard/metre increments just in case I need a reminder while in the field. You too might find this helpful, no matter what reticle you choose to use.

Illuminated reticles

A trend in recent years has been the birth of the illuminated reticle designs. I have a few of these scopes in my firearms inventory, but I find little advantage with them. I even occasionally forget to turn them on, which by the way doesn't adversely affect you seeing the reticle, and in some instances when I do remember to activate the illumination, I sometimes find the battery to be dead.

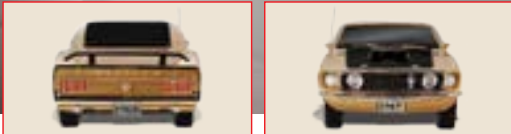
However, I do recognise when ambient light is in short supply a lighted reticle could add a bit of needed contrast. But as someone who frequently has a tendency to lean towards simple designs, I don't see a significant amount of advantage in this style of reticle.

Quick field adjustable turrets

Long-range shooting has become popular in recent years and this trend seemingly has led to the birth of easily field adjustable reticle designs. Rather than having to physically adjust for the bullet's trajectory, these turret systems allow the shooter to simply turn the exposed dials to

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What to look for in a hunting scope



This Weaver variable scope would work out well on the shooting range, but due to its size and magnification, it may not be the best model for many hunting applications.



Red dot sights like this BSA model have become popular in some shooting venues, but this wouldn't be Thomas's first choice when it comes to most hunting situations.



Thomas sometimes becomes so worried that the scope reticle settings might be accidentally changed while in the field. In this case he even resorted to taping them down.

compensate for the range and/or wind drift. In some instances, these adjustments have been programmed and designed to even match the calibre of the rifle and ammunition being shot.

I have a couple of problems with these designs. First, and possibly most importantly, is that reticles do not always move precisely as they are meant to. Over my many decades of shooting experience, it has convinced me that reticles seldom, if ever, move in consistent and precise manners. For that reason, I much prefer to set my reticles on the range prior to heading afield, then leave that setting unchanged while in the field.

My second problem with some of these designs is that, unbeknown to the hunter, those settings could accidentally become changed while the rifle is being handled or carried. Some designs allow you to set a reference 'zero' point in order to always be able to adjust back to that point and some turret designs require the dial be lifted in order to free it up for a change in its settings. If you should decide to purchase one of these style optics, these are good features.

Parallax adjustment

Many scopes, particularly those with a magnification of about 10x or less, come with the parallax permanently set at the factory. In this case those scopes intended for use on centrefire rifles are frequently set to be parallax free at 100 yards or 100m. Higher magnification scopes most often

come with a manual parallax adjustment. These dials are most commonly located either on the objective lens (front bell) of the scope or along the side of the scope tube. Even though there are usually range markings on these dials, I find it is easier to simply make my adjustment while viewing the target through the scope lens. In this case, once the target is brought into full clarity, you should be good to squeeze off the shot. However, making the adjustment in this manner, is considerably easier if the dial is located on the side of the scope as compared to those having the adjustment on the front bell.

The way I see it

Without a doubt, great inroads have taken place in recent years throughout the field of shooting optics. But while many of these innovations have encouraged a higher degree of proficiency for hunters, others in my opinion have essentially only resulted in increasing the profits of the manufacturers.

That being the case, the best single piece of advice for any hunter considering the purchase of a new riflescope is to make that selection carefully. In some cases that might mean to avoid some of the newest trends in favour of a product that has proved its own worth over many years of use.

Riflescopes, if they are properly cared for, will generally last a lifetime. So, taking time to carefully consider how that scope will be used and how it will match your unique hunting conditions and needs is important. ●

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Leading light

Matthew Godson turns night driving into day

The 20" Single Row Light Bar offers superb visibility at night.

When a box containing two new Viper Light Bars arrived for review I was keen to have them installed on my car as soon as possible. One was a 20" Single Row Light Bar, the other a 6" Single Row Amber Light Bar and straight away I decided to have the big one front and centre on my luggage cage for extra light while driving. The smaller one was destined to go up top too but on the side, to light up a campsite or similar.

But first let's talk about specs. According to Haydn Ryan, Product Manager at Lightforce, the design has a factory look and feel which customers have been asking for. The new Viper range is slimmer, lighter and beautifully designed, elegant yet rugged and supremely capable. It offers best-in-class performance with the Osram Oslon LEDs providing an average increase in light output of 25 per cent. The Viper series starts with the little 6" Single Row producing an impressive beam length of 256m at 1LUX, the 20" Single Row offering beam length of 562M at 1LUX which is claimed to be 160m more than its predecessor.

At the top end is the 50" Dual Row Light Bar which pushes out a beam length a little over a kilometre at 1065m, while the Viper collection also includes 6" and 10"

single row Amber Light Bars designed for dusty conditions or use in a camp environment. The amber light is perfect in reducing the number of bugs and insects attracted to an outdoor area compared to that of a white LED.

On the safety side of things, these Viper Light Bars project a reduced 500K colour temperature which provides better all-round visibility as well as reducing driver (eye) fatigue. This equates to less glare and reflection from road signs or when driving in foggy and dewy conditions, the whole range covered by a marine-grade powder coat finish courtesy of the industry-leading AkzoNobel application. This has been tested to Australian Standard AS1580 and is UV resistant and impervious to salt spray. The lens covers are polycarbonate which makes them less prone to scratching and damage than other light bars, so it's a case of quality inside protected by quality on the outside.

All light bars in the range come with a smart harness comprising a unique bridge rectifier to allow compatibility with the most modern vehicles on the market. The eight-pin switch connector makes it easy to plug in and play with seamless integration into a variety of Lightforce switches suitable for common vehicle brands, while the inclusion of 304 grade stainless steel side

brackets and bonus rear slide mounts make fitting the bars a breeze.

As mentioned earlier I planned to fit the Viper Light Bars to my luggage cage and, using the supplied side brackets, I fixed them to a length of 3mm steel flat bar which was then bolted to another piece of steel flat bar on the opposite side of the cage mesh. My initial impression was the bars with their sleek and slim design definitely looked the part.

Once fitted and wired it was time to take them for a test drive. The first time I took them out was an overcast day with rain forecast though this didn't affect the test in any way. As darkness fell I positioned my car so I could cook a quick meal out the back of the canopy under cover of a shed. The Amber Light Bar was used to illuminate the side of the vehicle and I was immediately impressed by the amount of light produced and the lack of flying insects, the only one being at the back of the canopy, attracted to a white torch beam shining on my gas burner. As promoted I believe these bars will be a great asset around any campsite.

The sleek-looking 20" single row bar was tested while driving down a dirt road lined with mallee vegetation. I was impressed by both the beam length and spread, considering there was still quite



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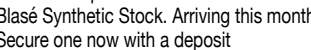
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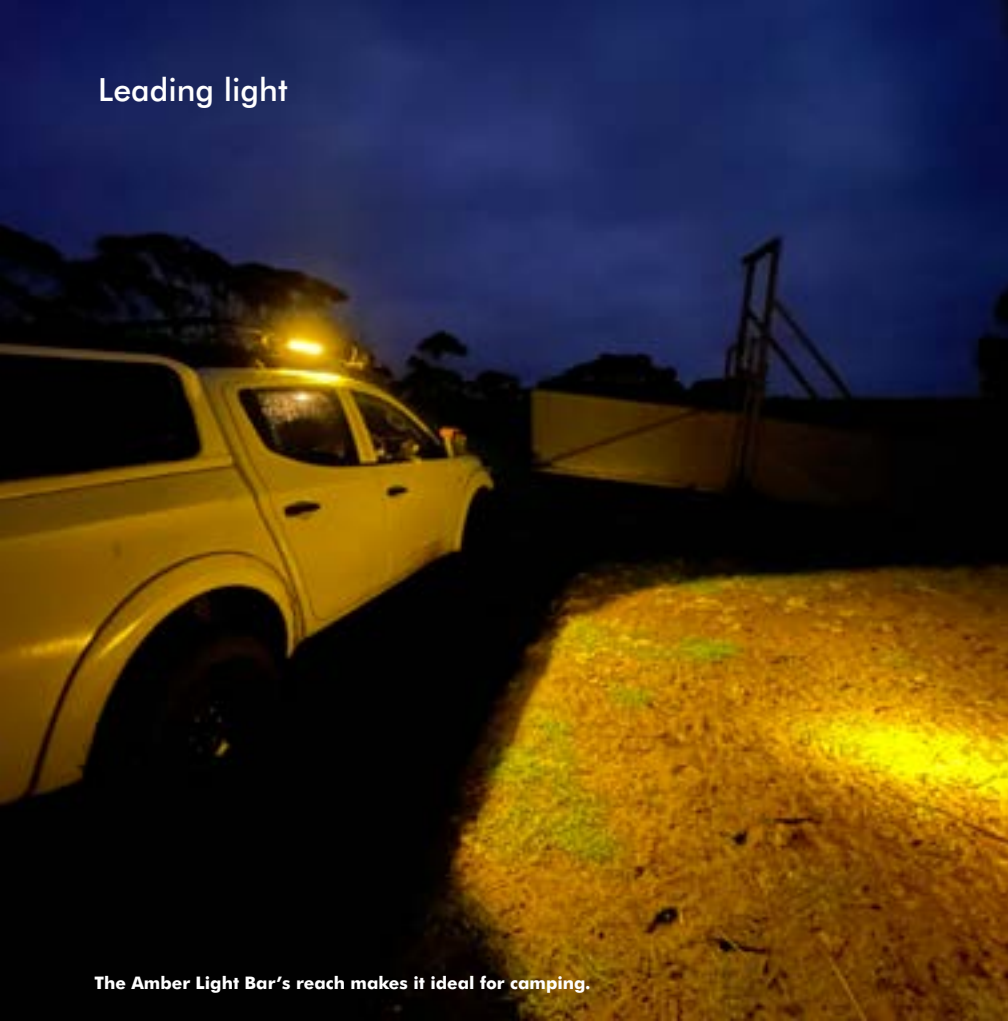
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Both Viper Light Bars exceeded my expectations with top performance from products featuring quality components both inside and out. The Viper series from Lightforce gets a big tick from me and at time of writing, RRP of the 6" Single Row Amber is \$179 with the 20" Single Row LED Light Bar at \$279. ●



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US needs public safety focus, not gun control grandstanding

Rachael Oxborrow



Gun control is expected to be a major political focal point in the United States in 2024 as President Biden's campaign for re-election kicks into gear. This agenda has been directly motivated by mass shootings in American schools and rightful outrage over these events in the community.

His most recent efforts to expand background checks for firearms purchases is in the final stages of approval following more than 12 months of executive action on the plan via the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. It began in 2022, when Congress passed and President Biden signed into law bipartisan legislation to help address this check by modifying the definition of who must become a federally licensed firearms dealer. Then, earlier this year, President Biden signed an executive order to expand the use of background checks for firearm purchases in the US, requiring a dealer to employ this measure.

This is not without teething problems; however, with the NRA Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA) outlining that the classification of a 'dealer' could capture someone selling a firearm privately even just once and potentially forcing a background check each time.

Biden has long made calls for 'assault weapons' to be banned, but commentators expect this will never come to fruition and instead policing and community programs will make up the firearms reform measures he spruiks. Considering the academic world is mixed and unclear on whether tightening of firearm controls causes a reduction in firearm-related deaths, this may be a more effective approach in improving public safety. In Australia, in particular, research out of the Australian Institute of Criminology points to an unlicensed person with an unregistered, illegal firearm who is responsible for crimes and, in almost all cases, crimes are drug, gang and organised crime related. Bans, buybacks and firearms laws directly affect law-abiding civilians motivated to follow the law to own and use firearms legally.

At state level across the US, many changes are occurring within local firearm laws. In the state of New York, the New York State Police will now conduct all

firearm and ammunition-related background checks, replacing the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in this role. There are numerous bills in the works in California, including fee increases for ammunition eligibility check requests, criteria for carry permits, annual training for firearm dealers and employees, an 11 per cent excise tax on sales of all firearms, parts and ammunition to go to a 'gun violence fund' and more.

The ongoing debate, changes and federal focus on firearms in the US are very different conversations to what would be had in Australia. Unlike America, where the Second Amendment gives their citizens the right to bear arms, Australians don't have such rights. In a Western democratic system, however, we do have the freedom to own and use firearms. We also have to prove that we are a fit and proper person for that freedom.

For the licensed law-abiding firearm owner, our firearms licence represents a good check of character and that we are a fit and proper person who can be trusted by society.

We use our firearms for sporting or food-gathering purposes, whether it's competing at the shooting range or hunting for the table to the benefit of the environment, as well as removing foxes, feral cats, goats and pigs, and other introduced species. Hunting is Australia's oldest and safest outdoor recreational activity.

Social commentary often considers Australia to be like the US in many ways, but when it comes to firearms there is a fundamental difference in laws, attitude to ownership and use. This centres around the Constitution of the United States and the Second Amendment referring to 'the right of the people to keep and bear Arms'. SSAA Inc is often approached to comment on occurrences in the US involving firearms and we all bear witness to the fear mongering in media and politics that Australia could 'end up like the US' if firearm laws are relaxed. An unfounded attempt at sensationalism when you consider the sheer population and America's National Rifle Association has similar goals to that of SSAA Inc but a

very different operating environment and modes of action, namely due to the Second Amendment rights of their members. The NRA also sits in a space where the First Amendment dictates a freedom of speech in law and instances of groups and organisations trying to silence this speech or make it harder to operate is becoming more prevalent. Most recently the NRA has called out New York authorities, politicians and office holders for attempting to silence the NRA by impacting its financial operations by calling on banks and insurance companies to cut ties with the Association. These tactics are not limited to the US however, with some banking systems and travel companies having discriminated against Australian firearm owners and the firearms industry in the past.

SSAA Inc operates advocacy and lobbying functions in the national political sphere and is in regular contact with relevant entities and departments such as the Attorney-General's Department. Australia's political system means licensing and hunting laws are handled at a state and territory level, meaning SSAA state and territory associations are in the position to lobby, advocate and respond to these functions. In the federal space, where SSAA Inc operates, representation is largely related to border controls, the National Firearms Agreement and any matters that rise to the federal level such as recent discussions around a National Firearm Register.

In the US, the states have legislative control over their jurisdictions and when it comes to federal regulation of firearm laws, the President's powers are limited, unless there is congressional support. He can direct existing processes that would affect background checks or import controls, but the reality is state and local officials control firearm laws. This means Biden's stance on firearm laws leading in to his re-election campaign is likely more about popularity and winning votes than getting to the root of America's public safety issue when it comes to illegal firearm use. ●



meopta



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SIFA



A great reward for an impressive rifle.

Voere rifle

an instant attraction

Ben Unten

I was looking forward to reviewing a Voere centrefire after having previously seen and used an heirloom of my long-time hunting partner, who now owns a 50-plus, year-old Voere rifle that was a hand-me-down from this late father. It has had countless rounds through it and still cycles and shoots well. It is intended to be passed on to his son.

The Voere LBW .20-03 looks pretty, straight out of the box. With an attractive Walnut stock and handsome lines, it's the sort of rifle you just want to pick up.

Manufactured in Austria, the Voere LBW can change barrels, calibres and stocks. The bolt is generously proportioned, measuring 23.7mm on my digital callipers. It utilises a push-feed system and features three locking lugs and is advertised as having toolless changeability. I can vouch for this, as when I first put my hands on the rifle, a previous handler of the review firearm had obviously been playing around with the bolt head/calibres and the result was that the bolt head was loose.

With a quick check of the owner's manual, I was easily able to reinstate a connecting bolt to secure the bolt

head in place without the use of any tools. The process took less than 10 seconds, which is impressive.

The Voere LBW action features a side safety, which operates on the sear and is located just behind the bolt handle. When the safety is engaged the bolt handle is locked in position. The bolt handle is angled downwards, which keeps it unobtrusively close to the stock in the closed position and it is less likely to catch on anything in the field.

Combined with the 60-degree bolt lift, it also keeps it well away from any optics/mounts in the fully open position. The ejection port is large, measuring approximately 95mm long x 24mm high – big enough to facilitate side-loading if required.

The trigger is adjustable (but that is best left to a qualified gunsmith). At the time of testing, my digital pull-scales had broken and had yet to be replaced so I could not give an actual pull weight. It came from the factory a fraction heavy, but it broke cleanly and without creep and did not affect accuracy.

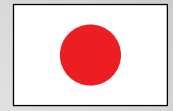
The Voere comes with open sights and the receiver is drilled and tapped to accept

mounts. The review rifle had been fitted with a Weaver-type rail for more versatile mounting options. The supplied, all-steel detachable magazine is comfortably weighty in the hand, holds three rounds (larger capacity magazines are available and are sold separately), and is released by simultaneously pressing levers on both sides of the magazine, which puts your hand



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Voere rifle an instant attraction

in the perfect position to catch the magazine for its removal.

The correct angle of insertion had to be achieved to reinstate the magazine, but this was easily accomplished with a little familiarity. The magazine hits home with a satisfying 'clunk'.

There is a 15mm steel recoil stud located slightly forward and underneath the action, perpendicular to the stock. This is designed to pass force from rifle to stock – like those used in old M98s.

The Monte Carlo type stock is a handsome piece of walnut featuring fish-scale chequering for improved grip as well as mounting points for two sling swivels. The metal-to-timber fit was excellent. The stock is supplied with a 15mm rubber recoil pad with a cheekpiece and, although provided with open sights and 30mm drop at the heel, the review rifle came fitted with a 2.5-10x 50mm scope with a 30mm tube. I was easily able to obtain a sight picture without having to lose cheek-weld.

The fully-floated, button-rifled barrel is 600mm long. It measured 29mm at the receiver ring and tapers down to 14.8mm at the muzzle. The .243 calibre tested features a '25.4mm in 254mm' (one in 10") twist rate.

At the range

Ammunition tested included, Remington 80gr PSPs, Federal 100gr Jacketed soft-points and Winchester 80gr Jacketed soft-points. There was a mild wind present, which became moderate later in the day during testing. All rounds ejected flawlessly. All ammunition was tested by averaging three, 3-shot groups at 100m, with the barrel allowed to cool between groups and for cleaning between ammunition brands.

Results

Remington 80gr PSP

Best: 35mm

Worst: 48mm

Average: 39mm

Federal 100gr Jacketed soft-point

Best: 45mm

Worst: 67mm

Average: 54mm

Winchester 80gr

Best: 15mm

Worst: 35mm

Average: 25mm

The rifle shot well with all ammunition tested. It showed a preference for the 80gr loads and impressed with the Winchester 80gr, averaging well under MOA (which is approximately 29mm at 100m) for the three groups. This is outstanding in a sporter-weight rifle. It managed to maintain this across six groups fired by two different shooters.

In the field

I took the Voere LBW out with me and some mates on a recent trip chasing pigs. After seeing nothing during the day, we decided to swing a light after dark. After not spotting anything for the first couple of hours, we finally came across a small mob of pigs.

I was on shooting duties and lined up the largest of the three pigs spied at a range of approximately 110m. Feeling confident with the accuracy of the Voere, I placed the cross-hairs on the shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The pig rolled over following impact and barely even twitched. It turned out to be a mid-sized, piebald sow.

Overall, there is little not to like about this classic-looking rifle. It will please the traditionalists with its appearance and the modernists with its outstanding accuracy all at an affordable price point. If I'm being picky, the action was a little ratchet, which may loosen up over time and was best when worked positively, but there were no misfeeds experienced during testing.

It's no wonder Voere rifles lend themselves to staying within the one family. This is exactly the sort of firearm that I would look towards to start my own heirloom tradition.

The Voere LBW retails for \$1950 and more information is available by visiting www.protactical.com.au or head to your nearest dealer for more information. ●

Looks good from the moment you lay eyes on it.



Change bolt heads without tools in seconds.

Specifications

Manufacturer: Voere, Austria

Model: LBW .20-03

Calibres: .243 (tested), .270

Overall length: 1170mm (including recoil pad)

Length of pull: 367mm

Barrel: 600mm/24"

Weight: 3.2kg

Action: Bolt-action

Magazine capacity: Three rounds

Sights: Open, receiver drilled and tapped

Finish: Blued

Stock: Walnut

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Moorra farmer David Hamilton has a roster of more than 40 recreational hunters to help manage pest animals.

Farmers fear for their livelihoods

New WA firearm laws a very real concern, writes Rachael Oxborrow

Changes to Western Australian firearms licensing could leave the state's farmers high and dry when it comes to managing pest animals and earning a living. David Hamilton and his family farm in Moora, two hours north of Perth, with their operation spanning 6500 hectares where they run more than 20,000 Merino and crossbred sheep and plant in excess of 1000 hectares of crops.

In any given year David's family would have 40 recreational hunters help control cats, foxes and bird populations, in addition to the work he and his family and staff do to remove feral animals from their property. He sources recreational shooters from members of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia's WA target shooting ranges, knowing they're appropriately licensed and have mutual respect for his operation.

"The value of their support is so important, we have groups visiting throughout the year so there's regular control and they often return year-on-year. They give me

the security and peace of mind that they understand my property and as a SSAA (WA) club member receive basic safety training and you know they're insured and accountable," said David.

As we went to print, the WA Government was preparing to release a rewrite of the state's Firearms Act for public comment after roughly two years of work. Narrative from the government during this time suggests permission to hunt on properties will be greatly limited, as will the number of firearms a person can own based on the genuine reason for use on their licence. This was recently confirmed through Freedom of Information documents obtained by the WA Firearms Community Alliance Initiative (WAFCA) representing SSAA (WA) and other firearms interest groups on behalf of all firearm owners.

"Pest control is a constant problem for us and the reality is not everyone is available to travel and hunt at short notice or as regularly as we need them to make an impact," said David. "We virtually have to

run a roster of recreational hunters helping us fulfil our pest control responsibilities as landowners. We must also manage a greater welfare issue during lambing season where sheep are laying down to give birth. Foxes are aggressive and will eat a sheep alive if we don't get there in time. It's relentless."

Limiting the number of firearms and people with permission to hunt recreationally on properties based on size, location and geography would have detrimental effects on the environment, WA's agricultural sector and the wellbeing of those living on the land who are left with an insurmountable task. It also doesn't account for other variables such as ammunition and hunter availability. According to David, lack of shot ammunition availability has meant he's had to buy another firearm and ammunition specifically for pigeon control.

"The people writing the legislation have an arbitrary number in their head and no appreciation for the similarities of whether you have 2000 or 20,000 acres to manage," said David. "On any property regardless

of size, you might have four different environments in one location which can have different pest animal problems and require different firearms and shooters to carry out the task.”

Restricting permission for recreational hunters to operate on private land and enforcing firearm number limits based on licence type are just some of the measures the WA Government is expected to bring about with the rewrite of the WA Firearms Act. Earlier this year, the government announced mandatory mental health checks for firearm licence holders and enforced the confiscation of 250 high-calibre firearms often used for long range target shooting, collecting and large animal control.

The WAFCA team with representatives from key target shooting, hunting and firearms interest groups, will be educating and encouraging the wider 90,000 firearm owners in WA to participate in the public consultation process expected to be announced in the short-term.

SSAA (WA) President and WAFCA spokesperson Paul Fitzgerald has been instrumental in driving this group to unite the state’s firearms community and demand meetings with the government. “This is a critical time for our community where if we don’t make a stand and use our voices as individuals the opportunity will be lost,” he said. “We’ve been knocking on doors, making phone calls, talking to media and politicians for the past two years about this rewrite and now’s the time for all of us to speak up and back our associations and WAFCA.” ●



Moora farmer David Hamilton and SSAA (WA) President Paul Fitzgerald discuss pest animal management requirements.

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Senator Bridget MCKENZIE

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- ✔ Greater access to our great sport

Authorised by Bridget McKenzie, National Party of Australia, 172 High Street, Wodonga VIC 3690.



Winchester Copper Impact .308 Winchester 150gr ammunition

Con Kapralos

Monolithic, lead-free projectiles aren't new. Ever since Randy Barnes turned up the prototype projectiles on his lathes and developed the famed X-bullet in 1986, many of the world's ammunition manufacturers have followed suit.

The monolithic projectiles have their claim to fame by being able to retain almost all their weight when being recovered from either ballistics gelatin or animals while exhibiting rapid expansion and excellent knock-down power. Being made primarily from copper, they have revolutionised the hunting landscape, becoming more pertinent in countries that are phasing out ammunition containing lead.

Winchester's Copper Impact ammunition has been designed by engineers specifically for big game hunters. Perusing its American website, it is available in 12 calibres, ranging from .243 Winchester right up to the .300 Winchester Magnum but also includes loads for the Winchester Short Magnum (WSM), Precision Rifle Cartridge (PRC) and even the .350 Legend straight-walled cartridge.

Even though in the US these calibres would be the mainstay in deer and elk hunting, for Australian hunters they would be right at home on all species of deer as well as larger game such as buffaloes, camels and scrub bulls. It's a tough projectile made for tough hunting.

Winchester Australia sent for review several packets of the Copper Impact ammunition in .308 Winchester concurrently with a CZ600 Alpha rifle. The ammunition is loaded with the 150-grain projectile and 20 rounds are contained in a striking box with livery of a Whitetail deer on the front and the ammunition's features and ballistics table on the rear of the packet.

The loaded rounds inside are housed in a foam insert and are polished with the striking crimson-red polymer tip in the copper projectile setting the round off perfectly. This polymer tip delivers rapid impact and trauma when striking the target and the solid copper construction

of the projectile transfers striking energy supremely while retaining maximum weight.

Ballisticians at Winchester also ensured that the projectiles have a high ballistics coefficient (BC) for a flat trajectory and long-range flight stability, using a boat-tail design. The 150-grain projectile on the review ammunition has a muzzle velocity of 2810fps, energy of 2629ft-lb at the muzzle and a G1 BC of 0.387 and G7 BC of 0.193. Avid handloaders and long-range shooters know what these numbers mean but as a hunter, it's something I take with a grain of salt.

Performance on game and how the load shoots out of my rifle are the two most telling aspects I look for when choosing a factory hunting load. For a lead-free hunting load the Winchester Copper Impact certainly impresses initially, now onto the rifle-range and field testing.

At the range

The Winchester Copper Impact in .308 Winchester, with the 150-grain projectile, was tested through a CZ600 Alpha rifle while performing accuracy testing with several other Winchester loads provided. For the Copper Impact ammunition accuracy test, three-shot groups were fired at 100 and 200 metres, with the point-of-impact initially set-up for a 200-metre zero. The CZ600 Alpha with its short, semi-heavy barrel turned in some respectable groups averaging between 1-1.25 MOA at both distances, more than enough for deer-sized game that they are undoubtedly designed for. The loaded rounds chambered easily into the CZ600 and fired cases ejected without any issues. At 100 and 200 yards, the striking energy of 2209 and 1844ft-lbs is more than enough for the quarry intended and even at 500 yards there is a tad over 1000ft-lbs of energy remaining, the bare minimum to ethically

kill deer-sized targets (figures quoted from the Copper Impact carton). As they say, 'the proof is in the pudding' and only hunting in the field would really give the ultimate verdict.

In the field

Having been a user of monolithic projectiles in hunting ammunition for many years, quite a few hunting 'experts' query me as to why I use them. I have no hesitation in using traditional 'cup-and core' and bonded bullets, utilising them to good effect over many years. However, when pursuing deer that tend to bury themselves into thick scrub once shot, having a decent blood trail that a complete projectile pass-through offers (with the normal heart/lung shot) is excellent insurance indeed and I can vouch for this on many occasions. The Winchester Copper Impact loads through the CZ600 were put to the test during two sorties in autumn and winter and in both instances, fallow deer were culled for venison. Fortunately for the hunter this time, there wasn't a need to track deer through the scrub as animals culled dropped on the spot and in all instances the copper projectile passed through the deer, with massive damage to the lungs and heart and ensuing blood trail evident. In the instance of a shoulder being clipped the projectile easily smashed bone and continued through the vitals and exited on the far side. That is what the projectile was designed to do and it performed as I expected.

Whilst the Copper Impact is offered in 12 calibres (in the USA), Winchester Australia are offering most of the popular calibres for the local marketplace. To see which calibres they are offering, peruse the Winchester Australia website for more information: winchesteraustralia.com.au ●





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Great Australian Outdoors Issue 4

We accentuate our great outdoors with 194 pages of 'destination, exploration and conservation.' A whole gamut of destinations have been explored, covering all compass points around this vast island. The plight of wildlife is put under the microscope in our extensive foray into conservation issues. And if you are planning an ambitious travel itinerary, there are tips to take on board among a raft of feature articles.

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SSAA Schrade Multi Tool Silver



This handy tool can be stowed safely in its sturdy, fold flap pouch and securely closed with a tough Velcro patch. The belt/loop system helps you keep track of your multi tool so you can cut, file, pry and pinch your way through any job.

\$59.95

SSAA turns 75 this year!

To celebrate the SSAA's 75th anniversary we have a special production run of 75-year anniversary pins and cloth badges.

The 75-year anniversary pins are uniquely numbered and measure 25mm x 30mm (approximately). The 75-year cloth badges measure 75mm x 60mm (approximately).



Pin \$29.95
Cloth badge \$19.95



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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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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.

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National

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Rimfire Postal Shoot

June 1-November 30, 2023
All SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette clubs
Program: 40-shot match in accordance with SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette rule book. Contact: Kathy Tobler email toblerkathy@gmail.com

National Muzzle Loading Postal Shooter

July 1–December 31, 2023
Program: 1 x Military 50m offhand Class 1; 1 x Traditional 50m offhand Class 2; 1 x Flintlock 50m offhand; 1 x 100m bench rest Class 1 & 2; 1 x 100m bench rest Class 3; 1 x 25m Precision revolver Class 1 & 3; 1 x 25m Precision pistol Class 2; 1 x 25m Snap pistol Class 1 & 2; 1 x Percussion shotgun; 1 x 100m bench rest BP Cartridge. Matches to be shot during programmed matches at your range and scores witnessed by range officer. Rule Book Number 8 applies. All scores to the Muzzle Loading Chairman by end of December; results announced January. Medals sent by end of February. All targets signed by Range Officer; include name/address of competitors and the event entering. Send scores to Steve Nicholas National Discipline Chairman; GPO Box 2013, Adelaide South Australia 5001 or muzzleloading@disciplines.ssaa.org.au, secretary@ssaapara.org.au

Australian Sporting Clays National Championship

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

National 5 Stand Clay Target Championships

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

SSAA National Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 23-25, 2024
Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birrale 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.

NSW

NSW 5-Stand State Titles

November 24-25, 2023
SSAA Griffith, Dave Wallace Range Simms Rd.
Program: 100 targets over two ranges. Nominations: \$75. Rules are 2019 Rule book 4.2. Prizes: Ammunition. Facilities include multi-purpose shotgun range, clubhouse, showers and toilets. Contact: Guy Pitchford 0409 555 244.

Handgun Rendezvous

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

Tas

SSAA Tasmania 5-Stand State Championships

November 10-12, 2023
State Complex, Woodsdale, Tas.
Program: Friday: Side x Side 50 targets HCP; Sub-gauge 50 targets HCP Saturday; 100 targets 5-Stand; Sunday: 100 targets 5-Stand. Facilities: Camping on-site, limited facilities, full canteen Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Dale Foggo 0408 361 638 or dalepest@msn.com

SSAA (Tas) Single Action State Championships

November 25-26, 2023
Glenorchy Mitchell Range, Tas
Program: Saturday: 8.30 briefing, 6+ stages. Sunday: 9.30 briefing, 4+ stages; Master Gunfighter stage and presentation. Contact: Ray Vallerine 0487 334 714.

SSAA Tasmania STATE Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 9-11, 2024
Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birrale 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.

Qld

Queensland NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoots

All (SSAA) Qld branches with approval to shoot Postal Metallic Silhouette Program: Shoot 1: February 1-May 31; Shoot 2: April 1-July 31; Shoot 3: May 1-August 31; Shoot 4: August 1-November 30. See National website for full event details. Contact: Hazel Bozic (07)4128 0467 or pms@ssaaqld.org.au

SSAA Qld Long Range Precision Championship

May 24-26, 2024
Host: SSAA Luna, Captain's Mountain Complex
Program: 23 May range open for Zero checking 2pm. 24th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 1 Rimfire 150m on Mini-core Target; Match 2 - Rimfire 250m on Mini-core Target. 25th - 8am sign-on; 9am start. Match 3 - Centrefire 500m on Mini-core Target; Match 4 - Centrefire 600m on Mini-core Target. 26th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 5 - Centrefire 800m on Core Target; Match 6 - Centrefire 1000m on Core Target. Nominations from SSAA website. Send to Secretary: luna@ssaaqld.org.au or PO Box 101, Inglewood, Qld 4387. Rimfire: \$50, Centrefire: \$60, all events \$80, single event \$25, juniors half price. Pay by 25 May. Cash on the day. Event is for Rimfire and/or Centrefire Class A or Class H of the Rifle Field Events. SSAA Long Range Precision Shooting Official Rule Book No. 1 applies. State medals for 1st-3rd for Rimfire, Centrefire Class A and Class H and Juniors, Aggregates and Teams medals. Cabins and camping available. See SSAA website for pricing. Contact: Richard White (07) 4652 4270.

SA

SA BPCR Silhouette State Championships

November 25-26, 2023
Hosted by Para at Monarto Silhouette Range. Saturday 9am-12 practice. 12.30 40 shot BPCR Iron sight match. Evening BBQ. Sunday 8.30-9 practice. 9.30am 40 shot Scoped match. Nominations \$25/day or \$45 for both. Current RMS rule book applies. Prize table on Saturday night. Contact John Visnyai johnviz@hotmail.com or 0421117391.

Vic

Victoria Muzzleloading Club State Championships

November 18-19, 2023
Eagle Park, Little River
Program: See National website for full details. Facilities: Unpowered camp ground area, onsite café, motel accommodation at Geelong, Werribee. Contact: Craig Kinder craigk@jeatech.com.au or 0409 707 157.



Sponsor a JUNIOR

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

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SSAA National Event Cancellation/Postponement Policy

An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA National, SSAA State Office or club directive.

SSAA National will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA National 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.

stay in touch!



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SSAA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

ABN 95 050 209 688



SSAA Membership Office, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761
 Phone 02 8805 3900 Fax 02 9832 9377 Email membership@ssaa.org.au

Membership No.

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Among Friends

Recently, I was fortunate enough to be invited to the launch of the new Rigby Shikari big game hunting rifle at the Australian home of Rigby in Brisbane.

It was my first event representing SSAA Publications, so I did my best cub reporter impersonation and armed myself with camera and note pad. Sorry, no press card at a cocky angle in my hat band, but I thought about it.

I arrived at the event with every intention of objectively representing all good gun writers everywhere. Then a strange thing happened.

I started to meet people, like Oz and Mark, both SSAA readers. After introductions, Oz mentioned that he had made a purchase based on my recommendation. I asked if I had got it right, and thankfully he answered yes. We then spoke about all things hunting, and Rigby rifles of course. It was a thoroughly enjoyable conversation, though I had to end it as I felt obliged to take a few pictures of the gear on display. While doing so I met Warren, another SSAA reader. Recognising me from my name tag, he mentioned that he read my column. Again, I asked if that was a good thing and yes it was.

During the next 30 minutes I enjoyed several, not dissimilar conversations about guns, hunting, shooting and Rigby. Pinballing from one exchange to another I began to pick up on a theme, a whole bunch of different people sharing stories of hunting, adventure with classic rifles.

I eventually found myself in front of a rack filled with truly magnificent Rigby rifles. On display were already purchased guns, brought in and displayed by their proud owners. Standing next to the rack was Ross Vasta MP, Federal Member for Bonner.

Ross and I had a great chat about hunting, politics and this displayed Rigby rifles. Not long after, I saw my chance and cornered Tom Auger, son of the late David Auger of Queensland Gun Exchange (QGE) and host of the event. There aren't too many of us North of the Tweed who didn't, at one time or another, frequent QGE and when I did get a chance to speak with Tom, it was great to learn of his own vision for the business.



Finally, to Rigby itself. I managed to get a few minutes with Marc Newton, Managing Director of Rigby who had flown out from England for the event. As these things go, Marc and I initially crossed paths via Facebook back in 2018. He offered an open invitation to visit Rigby and in late 2019 with the family I travelled to England. As part of our holiday, I took my eldest son on an overnight trip to London.

It was a real adventure, we caught the train from the Midlands and the tube to the Natural History Museum.

When we did get inside, we visited the dinosaurs, stood under the enormous Blue Whale that hangs in the Hintze Hall and photo'd the statue of Frederick Courteney Selous, the famous British explorer, officer, hunter, conservationist and inspiration for the character of Allan Quatermain.

The next day we visited Rigby. With Marc away on business, we were given the grand tour of the gun room and workshop and generally looked after like royalty by the team.

It was with those fond memories that I spoke to Marc about Rigby, its place in Australian hunting and the future. Now

while I'm obliged to write something about the new Rigby rifle, which will appear in a forthcoming issue, the night was defined not so much the gear, but the people.

For all the differences, within the shooting and hunting it's not hard to find community. It's a theme that has dominated much of my thinking this year, as I speak to more people than ever before.

While we live in different places, have differing and widely varying experiences and see things through our own eyes, it's hard to deny the similarity that lies beneath.

I regard myself as a very lucky hunter and part of that luck has come from the connections I've made. They have taken me far and wide and I know there are still plenty of places to visit, people to meet and game to pursue before I'm ready to hang it all up.



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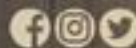
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